

# Physical Activity



**What You Need to  
Know**

This brochure can help you learn more about physical activity. It doesn't replace regular medical checkups or advice from your health care team. Talk with your doctor about physical activity goals that are right for you.



**Getting Healthier  
Together**

# Why Be Physically Active?

Physical activity is anything that gets your body moving.<sup>1</sup> It's one of the best things you can do to live a longer, healthier life.

## Regular physical activity is good for everyone.

This includes<sup>2</sup>:

- ▶ Kids and teens
- ▶ Adults of all ages
- ▶ Men and women, including women who are pregnant or recently had a baby
- ▶ People of different races and ethnicities
- ▶ People with chronic conditions or disabilities



## Regular physical activity has many benefits<sup>2</sup>

### Lowers your risk of:

- ▶ Heart disease and stroke
- ▶ Type 2 diabetes
- ▶ High blood pressure
- ▶ High cholesterol
- ▶ Some cancers
- ▶ Dementia
- ▶ Falls and fall-related injuries in older adults

### Helps you:

- ▶ Control your weight
- ▶ Feel less anxious and depressed
- ▶ Improve your bone health
- ▶ Sleep better
- ▶ Improve your overall brain health (sharper thinking, increased focus)



## Physical activity can also<sup>1,2</sup>:

- ▶ Make everyday tasks, like household chores, easier to do
- ▶ Give you a chance to enjoy recreational activities and have some fun
- ▶ Be a way to spend time with family and friends
- ▶ Improve your quality of life and overall well-being



**Think about the benefits that are important to you.** This can help motivate you to be more active.

# What Counts as Physical Activity?



Adults need to do two types of physical activity each week for good health—**aerobic** and **muscle-strengthening**.<sup>1</sup>

## Aerobic activity (cardio)



Physical activity that causes your heart to beat faster and gets you breathing harder.<sup>1</sup>

### Moderate-intensity activities

You're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat. You'll be able to talk but not sing during the activity.<sup>1</sup> Examples<sup>1,2</sup>:

- ▶ Brisk (fast) walking
- ▶ Doubles tennis
- ▶ Ballroom or line dancing
- ▶ Water aerobics
- ▶ Riding a bike on level ground
- ▶ General yard work (raking, pushing a lawn mower)

### Vigorous-intensity activities

Your breathing is hard and fast, and your heart rate goes up even higher. You can't say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.<sup>1</sup>

Examples<sup>1,2</sup>:

- ▶ Jogging or running
- ▶ Singles tennis
- ▶ Swimming laps
- ▶ Jumping rope
- ▶ Hiking uphill
- ▶ Riding a bike fast or on hills
- ▶ Step aerobics
- ▶ Kickboxing



**For older adults: also do activities that improve your balance.** Examples are walking backwards and sideways, walking heel to toe, and standing on one foot.

## Muscle-strengthening activity



Physical activity that makes your muscles do more work than they are used to doing.<sup>2</sup>

Examples<sup>1,2</sup>:

- ▶ Lifting weights
- ▶ Working with resistance bands
- ▶ Body weight exercises (push-ups, pull-ups, planks, squats, lunges)
- ▶ Heavy gardening (lifting, digging)
- ▶ Some yoga postures
- ▶ Some forms of tai chi

Include muscle-strengthening activities that work all of your major muscle groups—legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, arms, and shoulders.<sup>2</sup>

To count, do these **muscle-strengthening activities** to the point where it's hard for you to do another repetition without help. A repetition is one complete movement of an activity, such as one push-up or lifting a weight up and down one time.

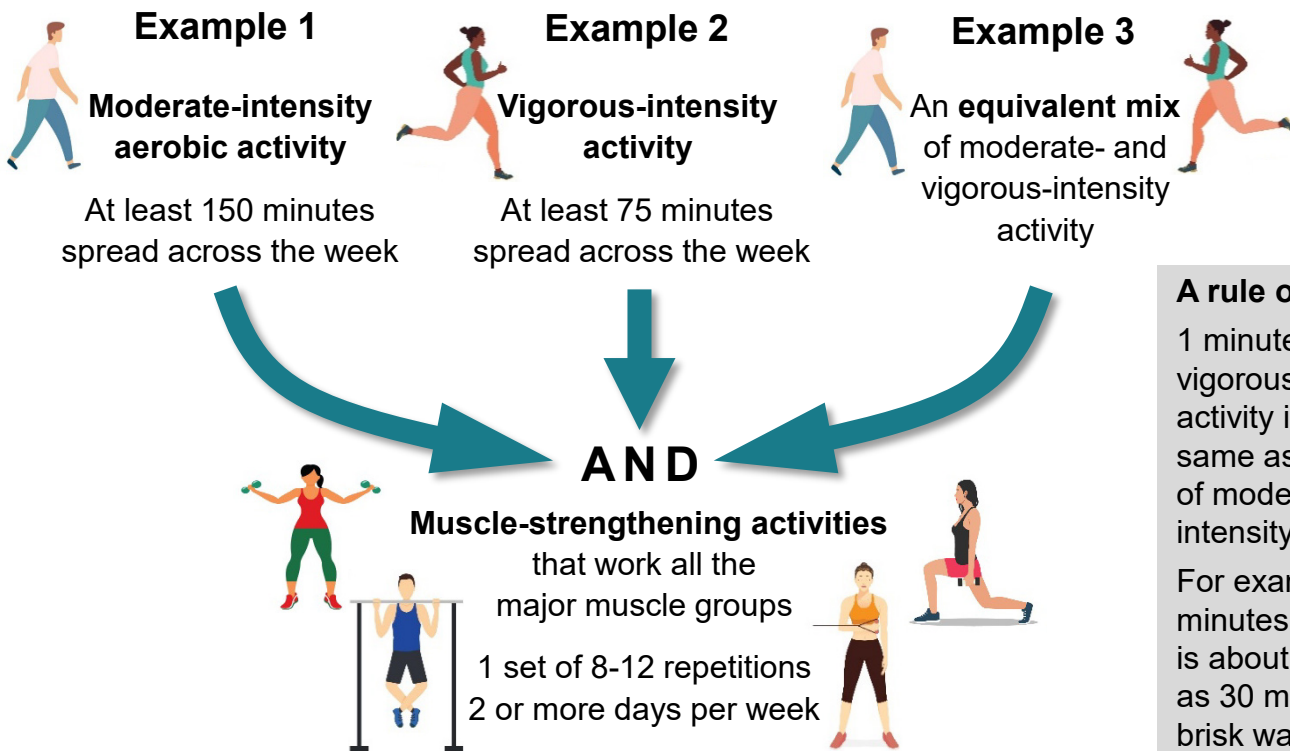
To gain benefits, try to do **8-12 repetitions** per activity. This counts as **one set**.<sup>1</sup>

# How Much Physical Activity Do You Need?



While it's important to aim for the recommended activity levels, try to be as active as you can be. All types and amounts of physical activity can count as long as it's at a moderate or vigorous intensity. Some activity is better than none.<sup>2</sup>

## Recommended levels of physical activity each week<sup>1,2</sup>



**A rule of thumb:**  
1 minute of vigorous-intensity activity is about the same as 2 minutes of moderate-intensity activity.  
For example, 15 minutes of jogging is about the same as 30 minutes of brisk walking.<sup>2</sup>

If you are already active and want to gain even greater health benefits:

- ▶ Work toward **300 minutes** (5 hours) of **moderate-intensity aerobic** activity each week.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Try doing **2 or 3 sets** of **muscle-strengthening activity** each time.<sup>1</sup>



Before starting a physical activity routine, **talk with your doctor or other health care professional** about the types and amounts of physical activity that are right for your abilities and chronic conditions.<sup>2</sup>

# Getting Started With Physical Activity

Make choices that will help you get fit, stay safe, and lower your risk of injury. Here are some tips.

## Start low and go slow<sup>2</sup>

If you are just starting out or haven't been active in a while, increase how long and how often you are active slowly. Then gradually increase your intensity from light to moderate.

- ▶ **Aerobic activity:** For example, start with 5 minutes of light-intensity walking several times a day, 5 to 6 days per week. Over time, try walking for 10 minutes, 3 times per day and slowly increase your speed to a moderate intensity. Gradually build up to the recommended levels.
- ▶ **Muscle-strengthening:** Start by doing one set, such as lifting light weights, 1 day per week. Over time, increase to 2 days per week. Each week also increase the intensity slightly until you reach a moderate level or greater. For example, you can do this by adding another set of 8-12 repetitions.

## Spread out the days you are active<sup>1,2</sup>

- ▶ To gain health benefits, aim to do aerobic activity **at least 3 days a week**.
- ▶ **Spread out the days you are active** across the week, such as Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. This can help prevent injury and fatigue (tiredness).
- ▶ You can do muscle-strengthening activities on the same or different days that you do aerobic activity. Do what works best for you.



## Safety tips<sup>2,3</sup>

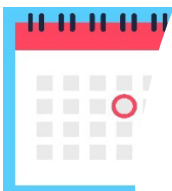
- ▶ Wear comfortable sneakers or flat shoes with laces that fit properly.
- ▶ Choose comfortable clothes that are right for the weather conditions—heat or cold.
- ▶ Wear light colors or reflective clothing to stay visible at dawn or dusk.
- ▶ Use protective gear as needed—helmet, goggles, shin guards.
- ▶ Drink enough fluids to stay hydrated, especially when it's hot or humid.
- ▶ When it's hot, do your activity indoors or early in the morning. Lower the intensity of your activity (walk instead of run).

# Making Regular Physical Activity a Habit<sup>3</sup>

These tips can help you make regular physical activity a habit.<sup>3</sup>

## Schedule time for activity

Before you set a date to begin, pick days and times that work for you. Also, think about where you will do your physical activity. Do your activity at the same time of day each time so it becomes routine. For example, walk on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 8:00 am.



## Get support

Ask family and friends to be active with you—this can help you stick with it and make it more fun.



## Make it fun

Choose activities that you enjoy. Picking several activities will keep it fun and interesting. For example, walk and bike ride during the week, and go for a hike or play tennis on the weekend.



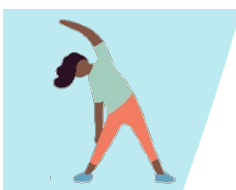
## Track your progress

Use an activity log or smartphone app to keep track of your physical activity. Include the number of days each week, your distance or number of minutes each time, and how you feel afterward.



## Be flexible

Try to stick to a schedule, but be flexible. If you miss a day of activity or stop exercising for a while, don't be hard on yourself. Get back on track and work activity into your routine again.



## Celebrate success

Reward yourself for meeting your milestones. This can help you stay motivated.



# Small Ways to Fit Activity Into Your Day

**As you try to make physical activity part of your daily life, find small ways to move more and sit less throughout the day.**

Here are some ideas<sup>4,5</sup>:

- ▶ Take stairs instead of elevators or escalators
- ▶ If possible, walk or ride a bike to do errands
- ▶ Do some gardening, rake leaves, or mow the lawn
- ▶ Park farther away from your destination, then walk the rest of the way
- ▶ Walk or jog in place or on a treadmill, do yoga, or lift weights while you watch TV
- ▶ Walk around your workplace while you talk on the phone
- ▶ Take your dog for a walk
- ▶ Shoot some hoops or play active games like tag with your kids
- ▶ Play some music that inspires you to move



# Action Plan

## A personal plan for physical activity



**Step 1:** Please check the box for each action below that you want to take. Note that not all actions listed may apply to your personal situation.

**Step 2:** Select how confident you feel that you can take each action you choose. Circle a number from 1 to 10. A confidence level of 10 is the **most** confident and a 1 is the **least** confident.



Make a plan for physical activity	
<input type="checkbox"/> Talk to my health care team before starting a physical activity routine.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Start slowly and build up how much physical activity I do.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Aim to do aerobic activity at least 3 days per week, and muscle strengthening at least 2 days per week.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Aim to do 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Include different types of physical activity	
<input type="checkbox"/> Choose aerobic activities such as brisk walking, biking on level ground, or water aerobics.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Choose muscle-strengthening activities such as lifting weights or body weight exercises (pull-ups, squats).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Add variety to my physical activities so they don't seem boring.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Make physical activity a habit	
<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule days and times for physical activity and set a date to begin.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Choose activities that I enjoy doing.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask a family member or friend to be active with me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Make a plan to get back on track if I miss 1 or more days of activity.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Reward myself along the way for meeting milestones.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Be more physically active	
<input type="checkbox"/> Take stairs instead of elevators or escalators.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Park farther away from your destinations, then walk the rest of the way.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Do some gardening, rake leaves, or mow the lawn.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<input type="checkbox"/> Walk in place, do yoga, or lift weights when I watch TV.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Step 3:** Think about which action you'll begin first. Write down a specific step you'll take to start. For example, if you choose "Schedule days and times for physical activity and set a date to begin," your goal might be: I will work on my physical activity schedule this weekend and select Monday as my start date.

**Step 4:** Please write the day and time that you will take this first step.

For example, Saturday, 9:00 AM. \_\_\_\_\_



# Physical Activity: What You Need to Know

## Why be physically active?



Regular physical activity is one of the best things everyone can do for their health.

Some health benefits include helping you:

- ▶ Lower the risks of many diseases
- ▶ Control weight
- ▶ Feel less anxious and depressed
- ▶ Sleep better
- ▶ Focus better and think more sharply

### Physical activity can also:

- ▶ Make everyday tasks easier to do
- ▶ Give you a chance to have some fun
- ▶ Be a nice way to spend time with family and friends
- ▶ Improve your quality of life and overall well-being

## Types of physical activity

Adults need to do two types of physical activity each week for good health:

- ▶ Aerobic activity (cardio)
- ▶ Muscle-strengthening activity

## Have a plan for long-term success

- ▶ Start slowly and build up gradually
- ▶ Find a convenient time and place for activities
- ▶ Schedule time for activity, but be flexible—if you miss a day of activity or stop for a while, don't be hard on yourself as you get back on track
- ▶ Have fun and choose activities you enjoy
- ▶ Get support from family and friends
- ▶ Track your progress and celebrate success

## Be safe

- ▶ Wear shoes that fit properly and clothes that are right for the weather
- ▶ Use protective gear as needed
- ▶ Drink enough fluids to stay hydrated
- ▶ Do your activity indoors when it's hot outside or lower your intensity level

## Ideas for fitting activity into your day

- ▶ Take stairs instead of elevators or escalators
- ▶ Park farther away from your destination, then walk the rest of the way
- ▶ Walk or jog in place, do yoga, or lift weights while you watch TV
- ▶ Play some music that inspires you to move

## Recommended levels of physical activity

### Moderate-intensity aerobic activity:

At least **150 minutes** spread across the week

**OR**

### Vigorous-intensity aerobic activity:

At least **75 minutes** spread across the week

**AND**

### Muscle-strengthening activities:

at least **2 days** a week

## References

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2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2018.
3. American Heart Association. Getting started – tips for long-term exercise success. Accessed April 6, 2020. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/getting-active/getting-started---tips-for-long-term-exercise-success>
4. American Heart Association. No time for exercise? Here are 7 easy ways to move more! Accessed April 6, 2020. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/getting-active/no-time-for-exercise-here-are-7-easy-ways-to-move-more>
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