



How much physical activity do adults need for health benefits?

Adults who are active are healthier, are less likely to develop many chronic diseases, and have better aerobic fitness than adults who are inactive. Adults need to do two types of physical activity each week to improve health – aerobic **and** muscle-strengthening activities.

Aerobic Activities

For **substantial health benefits**, adults need to do at least

- **2 hours and 30 minutes** (150 minutes) each week of **moderate-intensity*** aerobic activity,
- OR
- **1 hour and 15 minutes** (75 minutes) each week of **vigorous-intensity*** aerobic activity,
- OR
- An **equivalent mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity** aerobic activity.



Aerobic activity should be performed for **at least 10 minutes at a time**, preferably, **spread throughout the week**.

***Intensity** is the level of effort required to do an activity.

A person doing **moderate-intensity** aerobic activity can talk, but not sing, during the activity.

A person doing **vigorous-intensity** activity cannot say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.

Muscle Strengthening Activities

Muscle strengthening should be done **2 or more days a week**.

- All major muscle groups should be worked. These are the legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms.
- Exercises for each muscle group should be **repeated 8 to 12** times per set. As exercises become easier, increase the weight or do another set.



How can adults get additional health benefits?

Aerobic Activities

For **greater health benefits**, adults should do

- **5 hours** (300 minutes) each week of **moderate-intensity** aerobic activity,
- OR
- **2 hours and 30 minutes** (150 minutes) a week of **vigorous-intensity** aerobic activity,
- OR
- An **equivalent mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity** aerobic activity.

Health Benefits from Regular Physical Activity

Participating in regular physical activity provides many health benefits, as summarized below. Reducing risk of some of these conditions may require years of participation in regular physical activity. Other benefits, such as increased heart and lung—or cardiorespiratory—fitness, may require only a few weeks or months of participation.

Strong Evidence for Health Benefits

- **Lower risk of:**
 - Early death
 - Coronary heart disease
 - Stroke
 - High blood pressure
 - High cholesterol or triglycerides
 - Type 2 diabetes
 - Metabolic syndrome
 - Colon cancer
 - Breast cancer
- **Prevention of weight gain**
- **Weight loss, particularly when combined with reduced calorie intake**
- **Improved cardiorespiratory (aerobic) fitness and muscular strength**
- **Prevention of falls**
- **Reduced depression**



Aerobic Activities by Level of Intensity

There are different ways to classify intensity of exercise. **Absolute intensity** is the amount of energy expended per minute of activity. Moderate-intensity activities expend 3.0 to 5.9 times the amount of energy expended at rest. The energy expended in vigorous-intensity activities is 6.0 or more times the energy expended at rest.

Relative intensity is the effort required for an individual to do an activity. Relative intensity of aerobic activity is related to cardiorespiratory fitness. Less fit people generally require a higher level of effort than fitter people to do the same activity. Relative intensity can be estimated using a scale of 0 to 10, where sitting is 0 and the highest level of effort possible is 10. A moderate-intensity activity is a 5 or 6. A vigorous-intensity activity is a 7 or 8.

For most people, light daily activities such as shopping, cooking, or doing the laundry do not count toward the guidelines. Here are some examples of aerobic activities that require moderate-intensity and vigorous-intensity effort:

Level of Intensity	Type of Aerobic Activities	
<p>Moderate-Intensity</p> <p>A person doing moderate-intensity aerobic activity can talk, but not sing, during the activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brisk walking (3 miles-per-hour or faster, but not race walking) • Water aerobics • Bicycle riding slower than 10 miles per hour • Tennis (doubles) • Ballroom dancing • General gardening 	
Level of Intensity	Type of Aerobic Activities	
<p>Vigorous-Intensity</p> <p>A person doing vigorous-intensity activity cannot say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race walking, jogging, or running • Swimming laps • Tennis (singles) • Aerobic dancing • Bicycling 10 miles per hour or faster • Jumping rope • Heavy gardening (continuous digging or hoeing with heart rate increases) • Hiking uphill or with a heavy backpack 	

Muscle-Strengthening Activities

Adults also need to do muscle-strengthening activities **at least 2 days a week**, at a moderate to high level of intensity. These activities should **work all the major muscle groups**: the legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms.

No specific amount of time is recommended for muscle strengthening, but exercises should be performed to the point at which it would be difficult to do another repetition. A **repetition** is one complete movement of an activity, like lifting a weight or doing a sit-up. Adults can do activities that strengthen muscles on the same or different days that they do aerobic activity, whichever works best. Muscle-strengthening activities do not count toward the aerobic activity total.

Below are some examples of muscle-strengthening physical activities for adults.

Types of Muscle-Strengthening Activity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifting weights • Working with resistance bands • Doing exercises that use body weight for resistance (push-ups, sit-ups) 	

Ways for Adults to Get Physical Activity

To help adults understand the physical activity guidelines and to encourage them to add physical activity into their lives, the following materials are available at www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity:

- Tips on getting active
- Videos showing how to do muscle-strengthening activities and what counts as aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities

In addition, the following Health and Human Services (HHS) Web site has information and tools to help adults become and stay active: www.health.gov/PAGuidelines.

On this Web site you will find:

2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Toolkit to assist organizations in promoting the physical activity guidelines.

- Users' Guide – Promoting the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans in Your Community: A Guide to Building Awareness and Participation
- *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* booklet
- *Be Active Your Way: A Guide for Adults*
- *Be Active Your Way: A Fact Sheet for Adults*
- *At-A-Glance: A Fact Sheet for Professionals*
- Posters, event flyers, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

Be Active Your Way: A Fact Sheet for Adults



Finding out what kind and how much physical activity you need

How do I do it?

It's your choice. Pick an activity that's easy to fit into your life. Do at least 10 minutes of physical activity at a time. Choose **aerobic** activities that work for you. These make your heart beat faster and can make your heart, lungs, and blood vessels stronger and more fit. Also, do **strengthening** activities which make your muscles do more work than usual.

Why should I be physically active?

Physical activity can make you feel stronger and more alive. It is a fun way to be with your family or friends. It also helps you improve your health.

How many times a week should I be physically active?

It is up to you, but it is better to spread your activity throughout the week and to be active at least 3 days a week.

How do I build up more physical activity?

Do a little more each time. Once you feel comfortable, do it more often. Then you can trade activities at a moderate level for vigorous ones that take more effort. You can do moderate and vigorous activities in the same week.

How much physical activity do I need to do?

This chart tells you about the activities that are important for you to do. Do **both** aerobic activities and strengthening activities. Each offers important health benefits. And remember, some physical activity is better than none!

Aerobic Activities

If you choose activities at a **moderate** level, do at least **2 hours and 30 minutes** a week.

If you choose **vigorous** activities, do at least **1 hour and 15 minutes** a week.

- Slowly build up the amount of time you do physical activities. The more time you spend, the more health benefits you gain. Aim for twice the amount of activity in the box above.
- Do at least 10 minutes at a time.
- You can combine moderate and vigorous activities.

Muscle Strengthening Activities

Do these at least **2 days** a week.

- Include all the major muscle groups such as legs, hips, back, chest, stomach, shoulders, and arms.
- Exercises for each muscle group should be repeated 8 to 12 times per session.

Be Active, Healthy, and Happy!



How can I tell an activity at a moderate level from a vigorous one?

Vigorous activities take more effort than moderate ones. Here are just a few moderate and vigorous aerobic physical activities. Do these for **10 minutes or more** at a time.

Moderate Activities

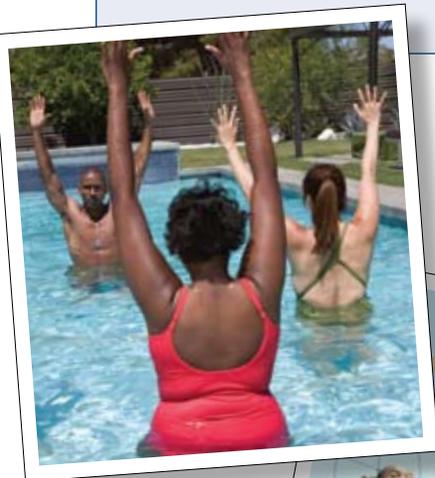
(I can talk while I do them, but I can't sing.)

- Ballroom and line dancing
- Biking on level ground or with few hills
- Canoeing
- General gardening (raking, trimming shrubs)
- Sports where you catch and throw (baseball, softball, volleyball)
- Tennis (doubles)
- Using your manual wheelchair
- Using hand cyclers—also called ergometers
- Walking briskly
- Water aerobics

Vigorous Activities

(I can only say a few words without stopping to catch my breath.)

- Aerobic dance
- Biking faster than 10 miles per hour
- Fast dancing
- Heavy gardening (digging, hoeing)
- Hiking uphill
- Jumping rope
- Martial arts (such as karate)
- Race walking, jogging, or running
- Sports with a lot of running (basketball, hockey, soccer)
- Swimming fast or swimming laps
- Tennis (singles)



For more information, visit www.healthfinder.gov/getactive

Be active your way by choosing activities you enjoy!