

What is physical activity?

Physical activity simply means movement of the body that uses energy. Walking, gardening, briskly pushing a baby stroller, climbing the stairs, playing soccer or dancing the night away are all good examples of being active. For health benefits, physical activity should be **moderate** or **vigorous** and add up to at least 30 minutes a day for adults and 60 minutes for kids.



Moderate physical activities include:

- Walking briskly (about 3½ miles per hour)
- Hiking
- Gardening/yard work
- Dancing
- Golf (walking and carrying clubs)
- Bicycling (less than 10 miles per hour)
- Weight training (general light workout)

Vigorous physical activities include:

- Running/jogging (5 miles per hour)
- Bicycling (more than 10 miles per hour)
- Swimming (freestyle laps)
- Aerobics
- Walking very fast (4½ miles per hour)
- Heavy yard work, such as chopping wood
- Weight lifting (vigorous effort)
- Basketball (competitive)

Some physical activities are not intense enough to help you meet the recommendations. Although you are moving, these activities do not increase your heart rate, so you should not count these towards the 30 or more minutes a day that you should strive for. These include walking at a casual pace, such as while grocery shopping and doing light household chores.

Why is physical activity important?

Being physically active is a key element in living a longer, healthier, happier life. It can help relieve stress and can provide an overall feeling of well-being. Physical activity can also help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight and lower risk for chronic disease. The benefits of physical activity may include:

- Improves self-esteem and feelings of well-being
- Increases fitness level
- Helps build and maintain bones, muscles, and joints
- Builds endurance and muscle strength
- Enhances flexibility and posture
- Helps manage weight
- Lowers risk of heart disease, colon cancer, and type 2 diabetes
- Helps control blood pressure
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety



Physical activity and nutrition work together for better health. Being active increases the amount of calories burned. As people age their metabolism slows, so maintaining energy balance requires moving more and eating less.

Some types of physical activity are especially beneficial:

- *Aerobic activities* – speeds heart rate and breathing and improves heart and lung fitness. Examples are brisk walking, jogging, and swimming.

- *Resistance, strength building, and weight-bearing activities* – helps build and maintain bones and muscles by working them against gravity. Examples are carrying a child, lifting weights, and walking. They help to build and maintain muscles and bones.
- *Balance and stretching activities* – enhances physical stability and flexibility, which reduces risk of injuries. Examples are gentle stretching, dancing, yoga, martial arts, and t'ai chi.

How much physical activity is needed?

At a minimum, do *moderate* intensity activity for 30 minutes most days, or preferably every day. This is in addition to your usual daily activities. Increasing the intensity or the amount of time of activity can have additional health benefits and may be needed to control body weight.

About 60 minutes a day of moderate physical activity may be needed to prevent weight gain. For those who have lost weight, at least 60 to 90 minutes a day may be needed to maintain the weight loss. At the same time, calorie needs should not be exceeded. Children and teenagers should be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day, or most days.

While 30 minutes a day of moderate intensity physical activities provide health benefits, being active for longer or doing more vigorous activities can provide even greater health benefits. They also use up more calories per hour. No matter what activity you choose, it can be done all at once, or divided into two or three parts during the day. Even 10-minute bouts of activity count toward your total.

Most adults do not need to see their health care provider before starting to exercise at a moderate level. However, men over the age of 40 and women over the age of 50 planning to start vigorous physical activity should consult a health care provider. Individuals with one of the conditions below should also consult a health care provider for help in designing a safe program of physical activity.

- A chronic health problem such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, asthma, or obesity.
- High risk for heart disease, such as a family history of heart disease or stroke, eating a diet high in saturated fat, *trans* fat and cholesterol, smoking, or having a sedentary lifestyle.

How many calories does physical activity use?

A 154-pound man (5' 10") will use up about the number of calories listed doing each activity below. **Those who weigh more will use more calories, and those who weigh less will use fewer.** The calorie values listed include both calories used by the activity and the calories used for normal body functioning.

Moderate physical activities:	In 1 hour	In 30 minutes
Hiking	370	185
Light gardening/yard work	330	165
Dancing	330	165
Golf (walking and carrying clubs)	330	165
Bicycling (less than 10 miles per hour)	290	145
Walking (3½ miles per hour)	280	140
Weight training (general light workout)	220	110
Stretching	180	90
Vigorous physical activities:	In 1 hour	In 30 minutes
Running/jogging (5 miles per hour)	590	295
Bicycling (more than 10 miles per hour)	590	295
Swimming (slow freestyle laps)	510	255
Aerobics	480	240
Walking (4½ miles per hour)	460	230
Heavy yard work (chopping wood)	440	220
Weight lifting (vigorous effort)	440	220
Basketball (vigorous)	440	220

Tips for increasing physical activity

Make physical activity a regular part of the day

Choose activities that you enjoy and can do regularly. Fitting activity into a daily routine can be easy—such as taking a brisk 10 minute walk to and from the parking lot, bus stop, or subway station. Or, join an exercise class. Keep it interesting by trying something different on alternate days. What's important is to be active most days of the week and make it part of daily routine. For example, to reach a 30-minute goal for the day, walk the dog for 10 minutes before and after work, and add a 10 minute walk at lunchtime. Or, swim 3 times a week and take a yoga class on the other days. Make sure to do at least 10 minutes of the activity at a time, shorter bursts of activity will not have the same health benefits. To be ready anytime, keep some comfortable clothes and a pair of walking or running shoes in the car and at the office.



More ways to increase physical activity

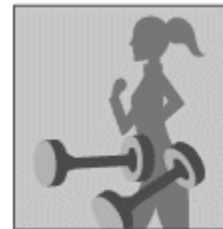
At home:

- Join a walking group in the neighborhood or at the local shopping mall. Recruit a partner for support and encouragement.
- Push the baby in a stroller.
- Get the whole family involved—enjoy an afternoon bike ride with your kids.
- Walk up and down the soccer or softball field sidelines while watching the kids play.
- Walk the dog—don't just watch the dog walk.
- Clean the house or wash the car.
- Walk, skate, or cycle more, and drive less.
- Do stretches, exercises, or pedal a stationary bike while watching television.
- Mow the lawn with a push mower.
- Plant and care for a vegetable or flower garden
- Play with the kids—tumble in the leaves, build a snowman, splash in a puddle, or dance to favorite music.



At work:

- Get off the bus or subway one stop early and walk or skate the rest of the way.
- Replace a coffee break with a brisk 10-minute walk. Ask a friend to go with you.
- Take part in an exercise program at work or a nearby gym.
- Join the office softball or bowling team.



At play:

- Walk, jog, skate, or cycle.
- Swim or do water aerobics.
- Take a class in martial arts, dance, or yoga.
- Golf (pull cart or carry clubs).
- Canoe, row, or kayak.
- Play racket ball, tennis, or squash.
- Ski cross-country or downhill.
- Play basketball, softball, or soccer.
- Hand cycle or play wheelchair sports.
- Take a nature walk.
- Most important – have fun while being active!

