



EXPRESSIONS
"HEALTH & WELLNESS"
NEWSLETTER

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS KEY TO HEALTHY AGING

Life holds few guarantees. One thing you can count on, though, is that if you're alive you're aging. An important factor in determining how well you age is how physically active you are. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention list these [benefits of physical activity](#):

- Weight control
- Stronger bones and muscles
- Improved mood and mental health
- Reduced risk of chronic diseases such as:
- Reduced risk of falls
- Improved ability to perform daily tasks
- Increased longevity

Heart disease, Metabolic syndrome, Some cancers, Type 2 diabetes

The current physical activity recommendations for adults are 2 ½ hours of moderate intensity or 1 hour and 25 minutes of vigorous activity per week, or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous activity. A whopping 60% of adults don't meet these activity recommendations. **Are you active enough during the week?**

DOES THIS LEVEL OF ACTIVITY SOUND LIKE MORE THAN YOU CAN DO?

Don't worry. New evidence suggests that just 15 minutes a day of moderate to vigorous physical activity reduces mortality by 22%. Of course, there are added benefits as time is increased.

The words "moderate" and "vigorous" describe the intensity of exercise. Whether an exercise or physical activity is moderate or vigorous depends on how hard you're working to carry it out and how much energy you're using.

Moderate intensity aerobic exercise is when you're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break into a sweat. You're working at a moderate intensity if you're able to talk but unable to sing the words to a song.

Vigorous intensity aerobic exercise is when you're breathing hard and fast and your heart rate has increased significantly. If you're working at this level, you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.

MODERATE EXERCISE

- Walking briskly (3 miles per hour or faster)
- Water aerobics
- Bicycling slower than 10 miles per hour
- Tennis (doubles)
- Ballroom dancing
- General gardening

VIGOROUS EXERCISE

- Race walking, jogging or running
- Swimming laps
- Bicycling 10 miles an hour or faster
- Tennis (singles)
- Aerobic dancing
- Heavy gardening (continuous digging or hoeing)

Certain health conditions may require a check-in with your doctor before you begin physical activity. So, talk with your doctor and make a plan to get moving. Start slow and gradually add time and intensity as you're able. Keep your goals reasonable. **Remember that when the focus is your health, some activity is better than no activity.**

To keep healthy or improve your health, follow the guidelines on how much physical activity you need to do each week, depending on your age.

STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

If you're just getting started, you might face certain obstacles that seem difficult to overcome. A few examples of common obstacles and strategies for overcoming them are shown in the following table.

Obstacle	Try This
<i>I just don't have time to be physically active.</i>	Identify available time slots. Monitor your daily activities for one week. Identify at least three 30-minute time slots you could use for physical activity.
<i>I don't have anyone to go with me.</i>	Develop new friendships with physically active people. Join a group, such as the YMCA, health club, or a hiking club.
<i>I'm so tired when I get home from work.</i>	Schedule physical activity for times in the day or week when you feel energetic.
<i>I have so much on my "to do" list already, how can I do physical activity too?</i>	Plan ahead. Make physical activity a regular part of your daily or weekly schedule by writing it on your calendar. Keep the appointment with yourself.
<i>I'll probably hurt myself if I try to be more physically active.</i>	Consult with a health professional or educational material to learn how to exercise appropriately considering your age, fitness level, skill level, and health status.
<i>I'm not coordinated enough to be physically active. I can't learn something new at my age!</i>	Select activities requiring no new skills, such as walking, climbing stairs, or jogging.
<i>My job requires me to be on the road, it's impossible for me to exercise.</i>	Stay in places with swimming pools or exercise facilities. Or find a DVD exercise tape that you enjoy and request a DVD player with your room.
<i>I have small children and it's impossible to have time to myself for exercise.</i>	Trade babysitting time with a friend, neighbor, or family member who also has small children. As children get older, family bike rides or walks might be another option.

Adapted from Physical Activity for Everyone: Making Physical Activity Part of Your Life: [Overcoming Barriers to Physical Activity](https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/getactive/barriers.html)(<https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/getactive/barriers.html>).

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES FOR ADULTS

To stay healthy or to improve health, adults need to do two types of physical activity each week: **AEROBIC** and **STRENGTH** exercises. How much physical activity you need to do each week depends on your age.

To stay healthy, adults aged 19-64 should try to be active daily and should do at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity such as cycling or fast walking every week, and strength exercises on two or more days a week that work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms);

OR

75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity, such as running or a game of singles tennis every week, and strength exercises on two or more days a week that work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).

OR

A mix of moderate and vigorous aerobic activity every week. For example, two 30-minute runs plus 30 minutes of fast walking equates to 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity, and strength exercises on two or more days a week that work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).

A good rule is that one minute of vigorous activity provides the same health benefits as two minutes of moderate activity.

One way to do your recommended 150 minutes of weekly physical activity is to do 30 minutes 5 days a week. All adults should also break up long periods of sitting with light activity.

WHAT COUNTS AS MODERATE AEROBIC ACTIVITY?

Examples of activities that require moderate effort for most people include:

walking fast	pushing a lawn mower	rollerblading
water aerobics	hiking	volleyball
doubles tennis	skateboarding	basketball
riding a bike on level ground or with few hills		

Moderate activity will raise your heart rate and make you breathe faster and feel warmer. One way to tell if you're working at a moderate level is if you can still talk, but you can't sing the words to a song.

WHAT COUNTS AS VIGOROUS ACTIVITY?

There is good evidence that vigorous activity can bring health benefits over and above that of moderate activity.

Examples of activities that require vigorous effort for most people include:

jogging or running	singles tennis	hockey
swimming fast	football	aerobics
riding a bike fast or on hills	rugby	gymnastics
	skipping rope	martial arts

Vigorous activity makes you breathe hard and fast. If you're working at this level, you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for breath. In general, 75 minutes of vigorous activity can give similar health benefits to 150 minutes of moderate activity.

WHAT ACTIVITIES STRENGTHEN MUSCLES?

Muscle-strengthening exercises are counted in repetitions and sets. A repetition is one complete movement of an activity, like a bicep curl or a sit-up. A set is a group of repetitions.

For each strength exercise, try to do:

- At least one set
- 8 to 12 repetitions in each set

To get health benefits from strength exercises, you should do them to the point where you struggle to complete another repetition. There are many ways you can strengthen your muscles, whether it's at home or in the gym.

Examples of muscle-strengthening activities for most people include:

- lifting weights
- working with resistance bands
- doing exercises that use your own body weight, such as push-ups and sit-ups
- heavy gardening, such as digging and shoveling
- yoga

You can do activities that strengthen your muscles on the same day or on different days as your aerobic activity – whatever's best for you.

Muscle-strengthening exercises are not an aerobic activity, so you'll need to do them in addition to your 150 minutes of aerobic activity. Some vigorous activities count as both an aerobic activity and a muscle-strengthening activity.

Examples include:

- **Circuit training**
- **Aerobics**
- **Running**
- **Team sports**
- **Mounting climbing**
- **Cycling**

MUSCLE STRENGTH IS NECESSARY FOR:

- All daily movement
- Build and maintain strong bones
- Regulate blood sugar and blood pressure
- Help maintain a healthy weight

For a summary on the health benefits of being more active, check out this Department of Health infographic (PDF, 500kb).

Look for our next issue of:

EXPRESSIONS "HEALTH & WELLNESS" NEWSLETTER - Physical Activity for a Healthy Weight