

EXERCISE FOR OLDER ADULTS

Why is exercising important?

Physical activity is necessary to maintain your wellness, so any amount of exercise you can do will benefit your health. If you are able to exercise, you should try to be active as much as you can each week.

How much should I exercise?

We recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise or 75 minutes of high-intensity aerobic activity per week. Don't feel you have to do only one or the other, though; one minute of high-intensity activity is about the same as two minutes of moderate-intensity exercise. If you can't achieve 150 minutes a week, you should try to do as much as you can.

While this may seem like a large amount of time to exercise, remember it's throughout the week. So, you can break it up however you need to fit your schedule and lifestyle. For example, you could take brisk walks three times a day for 10 minutes each time, five days a week. It can be helpful to plan ahead and write down your plan for achieving exercise goals throughout the week.

Here are a few more tips that can help you achieve a weekly fitness goal:

- Muscle-strengthening activities are beneficial and recommended at least twice a week.
- Know your limits—be sure you're doing activities that are well-within your abilities.
- Balancing exercises can be beneficial for those who tend to fall easily.
- Start with low-intensity exercises, like walking, if you are unfit or feel like you cannot perform moderate or high-intensity activity.

What is aerobic activity?

Aerobic activity is exercise and activity that makes you breathe faster and increases your heart rate. Performing either 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of high-intensity aerobic activity per week is recommended.

Moderate-intensity aerobic exercises

These are exercises that you should be able to talk through, but which still increase your heart rate.

Moderate-intensity aerobics examples:

- Walking fast
- Water aerobics
- Bike riding on level ground or few hills
- Playing doubles tennis or badminton
- Mowing the lawn with a push mower or raking leaves
- Vacuuming the floor

High-intensity aerobic exercises

These are exercises that would make it difficult to say more than a few words without stopping for a breath.

High-intensity aerobics examples:

- Jogging or running
- Swimming laps
- Riding a bike uphill or fast
- Singles tennis, racquetball or basketball

What is muscle-strengthening activity?

These exercises target the muscles in your arms, shoulders, chest, back, stomach, hips and legs. One repetition, or rep, is a complete movement, like a full sit-up for example. Continue doing repetitions until it's difficult to continue without help. A set includes usually about eight to twelve repetitions of your exercise. Try to do at least one set and then slowly work up to adding more sets to your routine.

Muscle-strengthening examples:

- Exercises with bands, weight machines or handheld weights
- Callisthenic exercises like push-ups and sit-ups
- Yard work, like digging, lifting or carrying
- Washing your car
- Washing windows and floors
- Carrying groceries
- Pilates, yoga or Tai Chi

Balancing exercise examples:

- Walking backward or sideways
- Walking on your heels or toes
- Standing up from a seated position

Source: American Academy of Family Physicians, 2010

Please call our office at 615.467.4636 if you have any questions or concerns.

What are balance exercises?

Balance exercises can help you improve your balance or steadiness on your feet. These exercises will help if you are prone to falling. Start slowly and work your way up to doing these about three times a week.

Exercise plan for: _____

Aerobic Activities

My goal is to perform _____ minutes of aerobic activities this week.

| Activity | Intensity | When I did it/for how long (put the total time of activity for each day) | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|--|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun | Total |
| | | | | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | | | | |
| This is the total amount (minutes or hours) of aerobic activities I did this week: | | | | | | | | | |

Muscle-Strengthening Activities

My goal is to perform strengthening activities on a total of _____ days this week.

| Activity | Intensity | When I did it (put "yes" for the days you did the activity) | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|---|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| | | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun | Total |
| | | | | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | | | | |
| This is the total days of strengthening activities I did this week: | | | | | | | | | |

Adapted from u.s. Department of Health and Human Services. 2008 physical activity guidelines for Americans. Be active your way: keeping track of what you do each week. October 2008. <http://www.health.gov/pagwdelmes/adultgwdelkeepmgtrack.pdf>.

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James N. Johnson, MD, FAAFP, CAQSM

28 White Bridge Pike ■ Suite 207 ■ Nashville, Tennessee 37205 ■ 615.467.4636 ■ www.OurAdvancedSportsMedicine.com
 Board-Certified, Family Medicine ■ Board-Certified, Sports Medicine ■ Certified IMPACT Concussion Consultant