

## 2.1: Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults

Adults who are physically active are healthier and less likely to develop many chronic diseases than adults who are inactive. They also have better fitness, including a healthier body size and composition. These benefits are gained by men and women and people of all races and ethnicities who have been studied.

Adults gain most of these health benefits when they do the equivalent of at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity (2 hours and 30 minutes) each week. Adults gain additional and more extensive health and fitness benefits with even more physical activity. Muscle-strengthening activities also provide health benefits and are an important part of an adult's overall physical activity plan.

### Key Recommendations:

#### **Avoid Inactivity**

All adults should avoid inactivity. Some physical activity is better than none, and adults who participate in any amount of physical activity gain some health benefits.

#### **Do Aerobic Activity**

For substantial health benefits, adults should do at least one of the following:

- 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) each week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity (such as brisk walking or tennis)
- 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) each week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity (such as jogging or swimming laps)
- An equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity

Aerobic activity should be performed in episodes of at least 10 minutes, and preferably, it should be spread throughout the week.

For additional and more extensive health benefits, adults should increase their aerobic physical activity to one of the following:

- Increase moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity to 300 minutes (5 hours) each week
- Increase vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity for 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) each week
- An equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity

Additional health benefits are gained by engaging in physical activity beyond this amount.

#### **Strengthen Muscles**

Do muscle-strengthening activities (such as lifting weights or using resistance bands) that are moderate or high intensity and involve all major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week.

### Examples of Different Aerobic Physical Activities and Intensities

#### Moderate Intensity

- Walking briskly (3 miles per hour or faster, but not race-walking)
- Water aerobics
- Bicycling slower than 10 miles per hour
- Tennis (doubles)
- Ballroom dancing
- General gardening

#### Vigorous Intensity

- Racewalking, 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 Activity

Muscle-strengthening activities provide additional benefits not found with aerobic activity. The benefits of muscle-strengthening activity include increased bone strength and muscular fitness. Muscle-strengthening activities can also help maintain muscle mass during a program of weight loss.

Muscle-strengthening activities make muscles do more work than they are accustomed to doing. That is, they overload the muscles. Resistance training, including weight training, is a familiar example of muscle-strengthening activity. Other examples include working with resistance bands, doing calisthenics that use body weight for resistance (such as push-ups, pull-ups, and sit-ups), carrying heavy loads, and heavy gardening (such as digging or hoeing).

Muscle-strengthening activities count if they involve a moderate to high level of intensity or effort and work the major muscle groups of the body: the legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms. muscle strengthening activities for all the major muscle groups should be done at least 2 days a week.

No specific amount of time is recommended for muscle strengthening, but muscle-strengthening exercises should be performed to the point at which it would be difficult to do another repetition without help. When resistance training is used to enhance muscle strength, one set of 8 to 12 repetitions of each exercise is effective, although two or three sets may be more effective. Development of muscle strength and endurance is progressive over time. Increases in the amount of weight or the days a week of exercising will result in stronger muscles.

[Click here to view a summary](#)

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To review the key recommendations, as well as learn more about “what counts” as moderate or vigorous intensity aerobic activity, watch the videos below:

<https://youtu.be/IEutFrar1dI>

<https://youtu.be/GEvJlmpZCoM>

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