

Recommendations for children and adults

CHILDREN

Children should engage in age-specific physical activity for at least 60 minutes per day. The school environment is a key factor in promoting physical activity through well planned physical education classes. They need to be more frequent, enjoyable, and devoted mostly to exercising.



Parents can also motivate their children by:

- Encouraging children to participate in after-school athletic programs or community-sponsored sports
- Planning outdoor family activities with their children (e.g. biking, hiking)
- Discouraging watching television, playing video games, or playing with the computer for long periods of time and without setting time limits
- Setting a good example by being physically active themselves

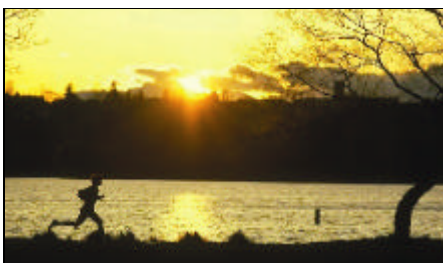
"No one is too old to enjoy the benefits of regular physical activity."

U.S. Surgeon General, 1996

ADULTS

It is important to remember that adults can achieve an active lifestyle and reap numerous health benefits (see Fact Sheet #1) without having to become an athlete. A person with a sedentary lifestyle who decides to be physically active may consider the following recommendations:

- Start out by choosing from among the different types of moderate exercise (see Fact Sheet #2), particularly those that can easily be built into your routine daily life.
- The activity or activities selected should be performed for at least 30 minutes every day or for most days of the week, and be maintained over time.
- Progressively build up to 30 minutes of physical activity, and the 30 minutes can also be split into multiple shorter sessions. For example, walk 10-15 minutes in the morning and another 10-15 minutes in the afternoon, use the stairs for about 3-5 minutes, and dance for 10 minutes, etc.



With the sole exception of those with chronic health problems, such as heart disease or diabetes, the above recommendations are safe and can be put into practice immediately. In addition, those interested in increasing the benefits of physical activity may consider progressively adding more intensity to their physical activity routines.

Recommendations for physical activity (continued)

ADULTS WHO WANT TO INCREASE THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

If you are a healthy adult, you can gain greater health benefits by intensifying your physical activity routine and burning more calories through exercise. If you want to follow a structured exercise plan that includes longer sessions of, for example, brisk walking, jogging or practicing a sport, it is recommended that you determine your training heart rate (i.e. your target exercise heart rate). This will tell you the safe number of heartbeats per minute that you should register when exercising.

To determine heart rates, follow these steps:

- 1- Find your maximal heart rate. This is done by subtracting your age from 220:
 $220 - \text{your age} = \text{maximal heart rate in beats/minute}$
- 2- Find your training heart rate, which can be obtained by:
 $0.7 \times \text{your maximal heart rate} = \text{training heart rate in beats/minute}$
- 3- To measure your actual heart rate in beats/minute after exercising, take your pulse for 15 seconds and multiply the resulting figure by 4.
- 4- Compare your training heart rate with your actual heartbeats per minute. If your training heart rate exceeds actual beats/minute, then you may consider increasing the intensity of the exercise. If your training heart rate is lower than the actual beats/minute, then you should reduce the intensity of the activity.

By engaging in more intense types of exercise, you can enhance your fitness, particularly your ability to exercise at moderate intensity over a period of time (aerobic capacity), which provides numerous health benefits (see Fact Sheet #1).

In addition, you can also add strength and flexibility exercises to your routines. Strength is improved by lifting a moderate amount of weight; and flexibility is improved by increasing joint range through stretching, Tai Chi, or Yoga-type exercises. They contribute to improving bone and muscle strength, lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and reducing stress on muscles and tendons.

OLDER ADULTS

Almost all older adults can prevent or delay the onset of chronic diseases and improve their health, despite existing diseases and disabilities, through moderate physical activity. Physical activity even benefits less healthy and frailer older adults because impaired physiological health does not limit the benefits of physical activity. An important additional benefit for older adults is the increased social interaction that comes along with being active.



- Older adults who live sedentary lifestyles or have chronic diseases should always consult with a physician before engaging in any kind of physical activity.
- In order to prevent muscle pain and soreness, older adults should begin their physical activity programs slowly and for short periods of time, and then they may gradually increase both intensity and time.
- In addition to cardio-respiratory endurance activities, older adults should engage in strength, resistance, balance and stretching exercises to maintain their muscle strength and prevent falls and fractures.

