



Health Facts



Be Physically Active

Many people feel they don't have time for regular physical activity, or they're too tired. But being physically active every day is one important aspect of a healthy lifestyle. Increasing your heartbeat, strengthening your muscles, and increasing your flexibility contribute to physical fitness. Being physically fit has a number of health benefits in both the short-term and the long-term.

Research shows that regular physical activity can promote psychological well-being and aid in reducing feelings of mild to moderate depression and anxiety. On a day that you're feeling a bit tired, down, or stressed, consider taking a brisk walk—it can help you.

Leading a physically active lifestyle can also help maintain a healthy weight and prevent weight gain. Expending calories through physical activity can help balance the calories you take in as food. Just remember, don't counteract all the physical activity you do by eating a lot of unhealthy foods.

People with higher levels of physical activity are at lower risk for developing chronic disease. Regular physical activity can

reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, stroke, coronary artery disease, type 2 diabetes, colon cancer, and osteoporosis.

Different intensities and types of activity provide different benefits. Generally, if you are able to talk while performing the physical activity, it's moderately intense. But if you're breathing hard and it's hard to hold a conversation, the activity is vigorously intense. Vigorously intense activity burns more calories per unit of time.

For most people, moderately intense physical activities include:

- Walking briskly
- Doing yard work
- Scrubbing the floor
- Actively playing with children
- Biking at a casual pace

Estimated Calories Needed by Gender, Age, and Activity Level ^a					
Gender	Age (Years)	Sedentary ^b	Moderately Active ^c	Active ^d	
Child	2 - 3	1,000	1,000 - 1,400 ^e	1,000 - 1,400 ^e	
	Female	4 - 8	1,200	1,400 - 1,600	1,400 - 1,800
		9 - 13	1,600	1,600 - 2,000	1,800 - 2,200
		14 - 18	1,800	2,000	2,400
		19 - 30	2,000	2,000 - 2,200	2,400
Male		31 - 50	1,800	2,000	2,400
		51+	1,600	1,800	2,000 - 2,200
	Female	4 - 8	1,400	1,400 - 1,600	1,600 - 2,000
		9 - 13	1,800	1,800 - 2,200	2,000 - 2,600
		14 - 18	2,200	2,400 - 2,800	2,800 - 3,200
	19 - 30	2,400	2,600 - 2,800	3,000	
	31 - 50	2,200	2,400 - 2,600	2,800 - 3,000	
	51+	2,000	2,200 - 2,400	2,400 - 2,800	

^a These levels are based on Estimated Energy Requirements (EER) from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Dietary Reference Intakes Macronutrients Report, 2002, calculated by gender, age, and activity level for reference-sized individuals. "Reference size," as determined by IOM, is based on median height and weight for ages up to 18 years and median height and weight for that height to give a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 21.5 for adult females and 22.5 for adult males.

^b Sedentary means a lifestyle that includes only the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

^c Moderately active means a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking about 1.5 to 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

^d Active means a lifestyle that includes physical activity equivalent to walking more than 3 miles per day at 3 to 4 miles per hour, in addition to the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

^e The calorie ranges shown are to accommodate needs of different ages within the group. For children and adolescents, more calories are needed at older ages. For adults, fewer calories are needed at older ages.

For most people, vigorously intense activities include:

- Jogging or running
- Swimming laps
- Jumping rope
- Rollerblading/in-line skating at a brisk pace
- Playing sports such as basketball or soccer
- Cross-country skiing

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Reduce your risk for chronic disease.

Do at least 30 minutes of moderately-intense physical activity, above usual activity, on most days of the week. You don't need to do it all at once—it's all right to break up your physical activity into three, 10-minute times throughout the day. And, increasing the intensity or the amount of time that you are physically active can have even greater health benefits.

Help manage body weight and prevent weight gain.

You may need at least 60 minutes of moderately to vigorously intense activity, above usual activity, on most days of the week to manage your weight. At the same time, watch the calories in the food you eat—you can figure out the right number of daily calories for you on the Estimated Calories Needed table on page 1. To sustain weight loss, about 60 to 90 minutes of moderately intense physical activity each day may be needed. These levels may seem overwhelming, but this effective strategy is used by people who have successfully lost weight and kept it off.

Achieve physical fitness.

This includes cardiovascular conditioning (getting your heart rate up), stretching exercises for flexibility, and resistance exercises or calisthenics for muscle strength and endurance. Combining these different types of exercises can help you be stronger.

WHAT'S STRENGTH TRAINING?

Strength training exercises are resistance exercises that can increase endurance, increase the strength of your muscles, and maintain the integrity of your bones. They're an important part of getting physically fit and strong, and it's beneficial to include them 2 or more days a week.

Specifically, strength training makes your body strong and more toned, and has the potential to reduce the risk of osteoporosis. Examples include using free weights, weight machines, or resistance bands.

FITTING IN FITNESS

Finding time to exercise can be a challenge. It is important to schedule it in and make it part of your routine. One way to fit in is to exercise during your breaks throughout the day. Studies show you get the same health benefits from breaking up physical activity into three to six 10-minute or two to four 15-minute intervals throughout the day. As long as you get your heart rate up and keep it up for the whole 10 or 15 minutes, it's your daily total that's important.

HYDRATION

Proper hydration is important when participating in physical activity. To avoid dehydration, be sure to drink plenty of water or other fluid (non-alcoholic) both during and after the activity.

MOTIVATION

There may be times when you need extra motivation. Leveling-off periods are normal and may signal that it's time to get help from others. You can plan activities with a group, find a buddy to exercise with, record your progress, and feel good about small, consistent changes.