

# Be Active Your Way



## Physical Activity Guidelines for Older Adults

When beginning any form of exercise, it's important to know how much physical activity is needed to stay healthy. Older adults can benefit from regular physical activity, as it is one of the most important things that you can do to help prevent many of the health problems resulting from age and lack of activity.

### Did you know?

Older adults who are 65 years or older, and who are generally fit, can improve their health by participating in some aerobic and muscle-strengthening exercise each week. This is also true for older adults who have a chronic condition with limited activity. Staying active will maintain or improve your health, balance and coordination. Strength and balance exercises also help to lessen your risk of falling.

### Aerobic Activities

Aerobic activities vary by fitness level. It can range from moderate to vigorous intensity. To get the most benefit from aerobic activity, older adults need:

- At least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) to 300 minutes (5 hours) a week of moderate intensity, or
- 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) to 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of vigorous intensity
- A mix of both moderate and vigorous intensity

It is recommended that you do some form of aerobic activity for at least 10 minutes at a time, spread throughout the week.

### Some examples of aerobic activity include:

- Walking
- Aerobic exercise classes
- Water aerobics
- Dancing
- Swimming
- Jogging
- Tennis
- Golf (without a cart)
- Gardening – raking and pushing a lawnmower
- Bicycle riding – either a stationary bike or on a designated bike path

## What is the difference between moderate intensity and vigorous intensity?

**Moderate Intensity** requires a medium level of effort. On a scale of 0 – 10 where sitting is 0, a moderate intensity is at a 5 or 6. You will notice an increase in your breathing and heart rate.

**Vigorous Intensity** requires a higher level of effort. On a scale of 0 – 10 where sitting is 0, a vigorous intensity is at a 7 or 8. You will notice a larger increase in your breathing and heart rate.

### Muscle-Strengthening Activities

Muscle-strengthening exercises work all major muscle groups – the legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms. For older adults to receive the most benefit from muscle-strengthening, you will need:

- 2 or more days a week of different activities
- Exercises for each muscle group repeated 8 to 12 times per set
- Increased weights or extra sets as exercises become easier

### Some examples of muscle-strengthening activity include:

- Calisthenics exercises that provide weight resistance
- Gardening that allows some lifting and carrying
- Yoga
- Exercises that use bands, weight machines, and hand-held weights
- Carrying groceries
- Tai Chi

### Exercise helps to lower your risk of:

- Coronary heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Metabolic syndrome
- High cholesterol or triglycerides
- Type 2 diabetes
- Breast cancer
- Colon cancer
- Stroke

### Proven Health Benefits

There is strong evidence that aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities help to improve your health and fitness, and reduce your risk of developing heart, lung, and other cardiovascular diseases.

### Additional benefits include:

- Improved cardiorespiratory fitness and muscular strength
- Weight loss when combined with reduced calorie diet
- Preventing weight gain
- Preventing falls
- Reducing signs of depression
- Improving brain function

Developing healthy habits like doing aerobics and muscle-strengthening exercises help to maintain your health today and for years to come.



For more information about recommended exercises for older adults, speak with your doctor or healthcare team.

The contents provided are for informational purposes only and not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Please consult with your physician or other qualified health provider prior to changing your diet, starting an exercise regimen, or with any questions that you may have about your health or medical condition.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2018