

# How much physical activity do adults need?

## COVID-19: How to Be Physically Active While Social Distancing

Physical activity is anything that gets your body moving. According to the 2018 *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, adults need to do two types of physical activity each week to improve their health— aerobic activity and muscle strengthening.

### Some Activity is Better than None

We know 150 minutes each week sounds like a lot of time, but it's not. That could be 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. The good news is that you can spread your activity out during the week, so you don't have to do it all at once. You can even break it up into smaller chunks of time during the day. Learn more about finding a balance that works for you.

Stay active: It can make life better.

Find out how exercise can support physical and mental health from the *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition [PDF](#) [Link](#).  
[PDF-15.2MB]

## Move More and Sit Less

Adults should move more and sit less throughout the day. Some physical activity is better than none. Adults who sit less and do any amount of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity gain some health benefits.

### How much activity do I need?

#### Moderate-intensity aerobic activity

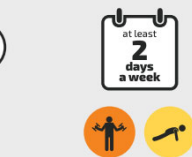
Anything that gets your heart beating faster counts.



AND

#### Muscle-strengthening activity

Do activities that make your muscles work harder than usual.



Tight on time this week? Start with just 5 minutes. It all adds up!

Want to learn more about important health benefits for adults? Check out the [Move Your Way<sup>SM</sup> Factsheet for Adults](#) [PDF](#) [Link](#) [PDF-502KB].

## Recommended Levels For Health Benefits

Adults should follow the exercises as specified in the following options. Check out this [print-friendly age chart](#) for a quick snapshot of the recommended amount of weekly activity for adults.

### Example 1



Moderate-intensity aerobic activity

### Example 2



Vigorous-intensity aerobic activity

### Example 3



An equivalent mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity

(e.g., brisk walking) for 150 minutes every week (for example, 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week)

AND



Muscle-strengthening activities

on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).

(e.g., jogging or running) for 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) every week

AND



Muscle-strengthening activities

on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).

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## For Even *Greater* Health Benefits

If you go beyond 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity, or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity or an equivalent combination, you'll gain even more health benefits.

### Aerobic activity – what counts?

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**Aerobic activity** or “cardio” gets you breathing harder and your heart beating faster. From pushing a lawn mower, to taking a dance class, to walking or biking to the store – these types of activities and more count. As long as you're doing aerobic physical activities at a moderate- or vigorous-intensity, they count toward meeting the aerobic guideline.

**Intensity** is how hard your body is working during a physical activity.

**Moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity** means you're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat. One way to tell if it's a moderate-intensity aerobic activity is that you'll be able to talk, but not sing the words to your favorite song. Here are some examples of activities that require moderate effort:

- Walking fast
- Doing water aerobics
- Riding a bike on level ground or with few hills
- Playing doubles tennis
- Pushing a lawn mower

**Vigorous-intensity aerobic activity** means you're breathing hard and fast, and your [heart rate](#) has gone up quite a bit. You may use the Talk Test to gauge the intensity of your aerobic physical activity. If you're being active at a vigorous level, you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. Here are some examples of activities that require vigorous effort:


- Jogging or running
- Swimming laps
- Riding a bike fast or on hills
- Playing singles tennis
- Playing basketball

If you are doing moderate-intensity physical activity, such as walking or hiking, you can talk, but not sing during the activity.

## Build Up Over Time

If you want to do more vigorous-level activities, slowly replace those that take moderate effort like brisk walking with more vigorous activities like jogging. Learn more about [getting started](#) with physical activity to improve health.

You can do moderate- or vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or a mix of the two, each week. A rule of thumb is that **1 minute of vigorous-intensity activity is about the same as 2 minutes of moderate-intensity activity.**

Some people like to do vigorous activity because it gives them about the same health benefits in half the time. If you haven't been very active lately, however, increase your physical activity level slowly. If you have a history of a chronic disease, consider telling your doctor you are planning to increase your physical activity, including moving to more vigorous activity. You need to feel comfortable doing moderate-intensity activities before you move on to more vigorous ones. Learn more about additional [types of physical activity](#)  [that are right for you.](#)

## Muscle-strengthening activities – what counts?

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Physical activities to strengthen your muscles are recommended at least 2 days a week. Activities should work all the major muscle groups of your body—legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms. Muscle-strengthening activities should be done in addition to your aerobic activity.

To gain health benefits, you need to do muscle-strengthening activities to the point where it's hard for you to do another repetition without help. A **repetition** is one complete movement of an activity, like lifting a weight or doing a sit-up. Try to do 8-12 repetitions per activity, which counts as 1 **set**. Try to do at least 1 set of muscle-strengthening activities. To gain even more benefits, do 2 or 3 sets.

You can do activities that strengthen your muscles on the same or different days that you do aerobic activity—whatever works best for you.

There are many ways you can strengthen your muscles, whether it's at home or the gym. You may want to try the following:

- Lifting weights
- Working with resistance bands
- Doing exercises that use your body weight for resistance (e.g., push-ups, sit-ups)
- Heavy gardening (e.g., digging, shoveling)
- Some forms of yoga



## Are You Ready to be More Physically Active?

Join CDC's Active People, Healthy Nation initiative and learn how to get started today!

[Join Active People, Healthy Nation](#)