

How much physical activity do older adults need?

 [COVID-19: How to Be Physically Active While Social Distancing](#)



Physical Activity is Essential to Healthy Aging

As an older adult, regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. It can prevent many of the health problems that seem to come with age. It also helps your muscles grow stronger so you can keep doing your day-to-day activities without becoming dependent on others.

Keep in mind, some physical activity is better than none at all. Your [health benefits](#) will also increase with the more physical activity that you do.

Older adults with chronic conditions should understand whether and how their conditions affect their ability to do regular physical activity safely. When older adults cannot do 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week (for example, 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week) because of chronic conditions, they should be as physically active as their abilities and conditions allow.

Making Physical Activity a Part of an Older Adult's Life

Don't worry if you're thinking, "How can I meet the recommended physical activity levels each week?" You'll be surprised by the [variety of activities](#)   you have to choose from.

Move More and Sit Less

Older adults should move more and sit less throughout the day. Keep in mind, some physical activity is better than none. Older adults who sit less and do any amount of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity gain some health benefits. Your health benefits will also increase with the more physical activity that you do.

Learn [more about](#) how to [measure your physical fitness level](#).

If you're 65 years of age or older, are generally fit, and have no limiting health conditions, you can follow the recommendations listed below.

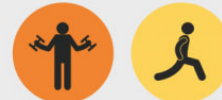
How much activity do I need?

Moderate-intensity aerobic activity



Anything that gets your heart beating faster counts.



AND



Break it up over the whole week however you want!

Want to learn more about important health benefits for older adults? Check out the [Move Your WaySM Factsheet for Older Adults](#)   . [PDF-1.3MB]

For Important Health Benefits

Older 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

(e.g., brisk walking) for 150 minutes (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).

Example 2



Vigorous-intensity aerobic activity

(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).

Example 3



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

on 2 or more 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).

For Even *Greater* Health Benefits

If you go beyond 300 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity (60 minutes a day, 5 days a week), or 150 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity (30 minutes a day, 5 days a week), or an equivalent combination, you'll gain even more health benefits.

Multicomponent Physical Activity

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- Multicomponent physical activity includes more than one type of physical activity, such as aerobic activity, muscle-strengthening activity, and balance training. Multicomponent physical activity can be done at home or in a community setting as part of a structured program that includes a combination of balance, muscle-strengthening, and aerobic physical activity, and may include gait, coordination, and physical function training. Recreational activities such as dancing, yoga, tai chi, gardening, or sports can also be considered multicomponent because they often incorporate multiple types of physical activity.
- Older adults should include stretching and balance activities as part of their weekly physical activity. Doing multicomponent physical activities can help reduce the risk of injury from falls and improve physical function.

Aerobic activity – what counts?

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Aerobic physical 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 towards meeting the aerobic guideline. Even something as simple as walking is a great way to get the aerobic activity you need, as long as it's at a moderately intense pace.

Intensity is how hard your body is working during physical activity. Try a few of these aerobic activities:

- Walking or hiking
- Some forms of yoga
- Some yard work, such as raking and pushing a lawn mower
- Bicycle riding (stationary or outdoors)
- Water aerobics

How do you know if you're doing moderate or vigorous aerobic activity?

On a 10-point scale, where sitting is 0 and working as hard as you can is 10, **moderate-intensity aerobic activity is a 5 or 6**. It will make you breathe harder and your heart beat faster. You'll also notice that you'll be able to talk, but not sing the words to your favorite song.

Vigorous-intensity activity is a 7 or 8 on this scale. Your **heart rate** will increase quite a bit, and you'll be breathing hard enough that you won't be able to say more than a few words without stopping to catch your breath.

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

Everyone's fitness level is different. This means that walking may feel like a moderate-intensity activity to you, but for others, it may feel vigorous. It all depends on you – the shape you're in, what you feel comfortable doing, and your health condition. What's important is that you do physical activities that are right for you and your abilities.

Muscle-strengthening activities – what counts?

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Besides aerobic activity, you need to do things to make your muscles stronger at least 2 days a week. These types of activities will help keep you from losing muscle as you get older.


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 one 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, but to

gain even more benefits, do 2 or 3 sets.

There are many ways you can strengthen your muscles, whether it's at home or the gym. The activities you choose should work all the major muscle groups of your body (legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms). You may want to try:

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

Stay active: It can make life better.

Find out how exercise can support physical and mental health from the [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition](#)  [PDF-15.2MB] [↗](#)



Are You Ready to be More Physically Active?

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

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