

Physical activity guidelines for

ADULTS (19–64 YEARS)



1. Adults should aim to be active daily. Over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more – one way to approach this is to do 30 minutes on at least 5 days a week.
2. Alternatively, comparable benefits can be achieved through 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity spread across the week or combinations of moderate and vigorous intensity activity.
3. Adults should also undertake physical activity to improve muscle strength on at least two days a week.
4. All adults should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

Individual physical and mental capabilities should be considered when interpreting the guidelines.

Examples of physical activity that meet the guidelines

Moderate intensity physical activities will cause adults to get warmer and breathe harder and their hearts to beat faster, but they should still be able to carry on a conversation. Examples include:

- Brisk walking
- Cycling

Vigorous intensity physical activities will cause adults to get warmer and breathe much harder and their hearts to beat rapidly, making it more difficult to carry on a conversation. Examples include:

- Running
- Sports such as swimming or football

Physical activities that strengthen muscles involve using body weight or working against a resistance. This should involve using all the major muscle groups. Examples include:

- Exercising with weights
- Carrying or moving heavy loads such as groceries

Minimising sedentary behaviour may include:

- Reducing time spent watching TV, using the computer or playing video games
- Taking regular breaks at work
- Breaking up sedentary time such as swapping a long bus or car journey for walking part of the way

What are the benefits of being active daily?

- Reduces risk of a range of diseases, e.g. coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes
- Helps maintain a healthy weight
- Helps maintain ability to perform everyday tasks with ease
- Improves self-esteem
- Reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety

For further information: *Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers* (2011)

How much physical activity do adults aged 19-64 years old need to do to keep healthy?

To stay healthy or to improve health, adults need to do two types of physical activity each week: aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity.

Physical activity for adults aged 19-64

To stay healthy, adults aged 19-64 should try to be active daily and should do:



At least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity such as cycling or fast walking 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).

OR



75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity such as running or a game of singles tennis 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).

OR



An equivalent mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity every week (for example 2 30-minute runs plus 30 minutes of fast walking), **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).

What counts as moderate-intensity aerobic activity?

Examples of activities that require moderate effort for most people include:

- walking fast
- water aerobics
- riding a bike on level ground or with few hills
- doubles tennis
- pushing a lawn mower
- hiking
- skateboarding
- rollerblading
- volleyball
- basketball
- netball

5 x 30 minutes

One way to do your recommended 150 minutes of weekly physical activity is to do 30 minutes on 5 days a week.

Moderate-intensity aerobic activity means you're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat. One way to tell if you're working at a moderate intensity is if you can still talk, but you can't sing the words to a song.

What counts as vigorous-intensity aerobic activity?

Examples of activities that require vigorous effort for most people include:

- jogging or running
- swimming fast
- riding a bike fast or on hills
- singles tennis
- football
- rugby
- skipping rope
- hockey
- aerobics
- gymnastics
- martial arts

Vigorous-intensity aerobic activity means you're breathing hard and fast, and your heart rate has gone up quite a bit. If you're working at this level, you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.

In general, 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity can give similar health benefits to 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity.

What counts as muscle-strengthening activity?

Muscle-strengthening exercises are counted in repetitions and sets. A repetition is 1 complete movement of an activity, like lifting a weight or doing a sit-up. A set is a group of repetitions.

For each activity, try to do 8 to 12 repetitions in each set. Try to do at least 1 set of each muscle-strengthening activity. You'll get even more benefits if you do 2 or 3 sets.

Healthy weight

- Adults who are overweight can improve their health by meeting the activity guidelines, even if they don't lose weight.
- To lose weight, you are likely to need to do more than 150 minutes a week and make changes to your diet.

- Start by gradually building up towards 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week.

To get health benefits from muscle-strengthening activities, you should do them to the point where you struggle to complete another repetition.

There are many ways you can strengthen your muscles, whether it's at home or in the gym. Examples of muscle-strengthening activities for most people include:

- lifting weights
- working with resistance bands
- doing exercises that use your body weight for resistance, such as push-ups and sit-ups
- heavy gardening, such as digging and shoveling
- yoga

You can do activities that strengthen your muscles on the same day or on different days as your aerobic activity, whatever's best for you.

However, muscle-strengthening activities don't count towards your aerobic activity total, so you'll need to do them in addition to your aerobic activity.

Some vigorous-intensity aerobic activities may provide 75 minutes of aerobic activity and sufficient muscle-strengthening activity. Examples include circuit training and sports such as football or rugby.