

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY for LIFE – Older Adults

2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

How Much Physical Activity Should I Do?

For **all people**, some activity is better than none! If you aren't limited by chronic health problems¹ you should be as active as you can be. Avoid being inactive.

Older adults should do:

- 2 hours and 30 minutes a week of moderate-intensity² aerobic activity,
OR
- 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity³ aerobic activity
OR
- Combine equal amounts of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity.
- Do aerobic⁴ activity at least 10 minutes at a time throughout the week.
- Do activities that make your arm, leg, chest, back, and shoulder muscles strong at least 2 days per week.
- Older adults should also do exercises that maintain or improve balance if they are at risk for falling.

¹**People with chronic conditions** (such as diabetes, heart disease, or osteoarthritis) should talk to a health care provider about physical activity.

²**Moderate intensity activity:** breathing is harder and faster than normal, but you can still talk while you exercise.

³**Vigorous intensity activity:** breathing is hard enough that you cannot talk while you exercise.

⁴**Aerobic means** "with oxygen." Exercises like walking, running, biking, swimming and dancing.

Note: Certain medications affect your heart rate when you exercise so be sure to check with a health care provider first!

Health Benefits of Physical Activity for Older Adults

Lower risk of:

- Early death
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Type 2 diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Metabolic syndrome
- Colon and breast cancers
- Lung and endometrial cancers
- Hip fracture

Added benefits:

- Less weight gain
- More weight loss (with diet)
- Better heart and muscle fitness
- Fewer falls
- Less depression
- Better cognitive function
- Better physical function
- Better bone density
- Better sleep quality

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Sources:

HHS, USDA (2005). *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
HHS (2008). *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*.