



Regular physical activity improves overall wellbeing and helps the body function at its best. It decreases stress, improves mood, and increases the ability to cope with life's demands. It also reduces the risk of premature death and of developing chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, certain types of cancer, Type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis (management of these conditions is typically improved as well). Finally, regular exercise helps the body to maintain its natural weight.

Aerobic Physical Activity: Guidelines For Adults

WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES?

To achieve health benefits, adults should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate-to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more. This is best spread out over a week, for example, 30 minutes or more of moderate intensity activity on five days a week. More physical activity provides greater health benefits, but only to a point - more is not always better, as you will read about below. While moderate exercise can be done every day of the week, it is not advisable to do more than five vigorous workouts per week. If you like vigorous activity, try doing a moderate intensity workout between days of vigorous activity to ensure that your body has time to recover between workouts.

While moderate and vigorous activity both provide health benefits, many people find a moderate pace more enjoyable. And finding something you enjoy is key. Most often people 'fall off the exercise wagon' because they have chosen an activity or plan that doesn't fit them - not because they are lazy or lack willpower. Give some real thought to the kinds of activity that you like and that find invigorating - rather than exhausting. Physical activity should feel good!

LET'S TALK INTENSITY

MODERATE-INTENSITY physical activities cause you to feel somewhat warm and to sweat a little. Your breathing is harder, but you should be able to carry on a conversation while exercising.

Examples:

- Brisk walking, 5-6.5 km/hr (9-12 minute kilometer)
- Ice Skating at a leisurely pace
- Bike riding

VIGOROUS-INTENSITY physical activities cause you to sweat and feel quite warm. Your breathing is more rapid making it difficult to carry on a conversation while exercising.

Examples:

- Race walking, jogging or running
- Cross country skiing

NOTE: It is also beneficial to add muscle-strengthening activities, which use major muscle groups, at least two days per week.

OVER ➞

Many people exercise to build muscle and in hopes of burning body fat. Surprisingly, this only works if you are eating enough-- and enough is between 1,800 – 2,500 kcal/day for a moderately active woman (depending on height, build and genetics). If you exercise when your food intake is low (i.e., less than 1,500 kcal/day) your body cannot use fat for fuel and will break down muscle tissue to use instead. To get the most benefits from being physically active, eat regularly (at least every 4-5 hours) and try to get enough of the energy and nutrients you need from wholesome foods.

HOW MUCH EXERCISE IS TOO MUCH?

It can be tempting to apply the 'more is better' philosophy to exercise, but the benefits of physical activity are actually reversed if we do too much. Performing vigorous exercise on more than five days a week doesn't give your body enough time to repair itself and puts you at risk of overtraining. While our bodies typically let us know when we are doing too much, it's easy to ignore the signals. If you are frequently tired and sluggish, it may be time to scale back your workouts. Pay special attention to the list below; if two or more signs and symptoms of over exercising (called overtraining) apply to you, you may be doing too much! Performance is actually enhanced when you treat your body with care.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF OVERTRAINING

If you experience two or more of the following symptoms, reduce your activity for at least a few weeks and note whether the issues improve. If symptoms persist, consult with the appropriate professional (e.g., physician, physiotherapist, personal trainer).

- Exercise feels harder than usual
- Tired and sluggish
- Slower recovery from workouts
- Heart rate is higher than usual at a given pace and does not level off as it typically does
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches
- Sleep problems
- Regular stiff and sore muscles and joints
- Frequent sore throats, colds, and/or cold sores
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Loss of menstruation
- Feeling down
- Less interest or pleasure in activities
- Decreased confidence
- Mood swings
- Difficulty concentrating

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