



A nutrition Fact Sheet



Physical Activity: What You Need to Know

What are the types of physical activity?

Aerobic activities make you breathe hard and your heart beat faster. Aerobic activities can be moderate or vigorous in their intensity. During moderate physical activity, you can talk while you do them, but you can't sing. During vigorous physical activity, you can only say a few words without stopping to catch your breath.

Muscle-strengthening activities include things like push-ups, sit-ups, and lifting weights.

Bone-strengthening activities, like jumping, are especially important for children and adolescents. These activities produce a force on the bones that promotes bone growth and strength.

Balance and stretching activities reduce the risk of injuries. Examples are tai chi and yoga.

Physical activity is important for good health! If you are a parent, make sure you are setting a good example for your kids by being active and making physical activity a part of your family's life.



How much physical activity should we do?

Adults

Aerobic: Adults should do **at least 2½ hours a week of moderate or 1¼ hours a week vigorous physical activity**. This translates to 30 minutes of moderate exercise or 15 minutes of vigorous exercise 5 days a week. Spreading activity over at least 3 days a week is best. Physical activities should be done for at least 10 minutes at a time.

Strengthening: Adults should perform strengthening exercises **at least 2 days a week**.

Children (6-17)

Aerobic: Children should do **at least 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous activity each day**. Vigorous activity should be done at least 3 days a week. (This is included in the 60 minutes per day.)

Muscle-strengthening: Children should do muscle-strengthening activities (like climbing or crossing monkey bars) **at least 3 days a week**.

Bone-strengthening: Children should do bone-strengthening activities, like jumping, **at least 3 days a week**.

Young Children (2-5 years old)

There is no specific recommendation for the number of minutes per day that young children should be active. Young children should play actively several times a day.

How can we fit physical activity into our day?

- Take a brisk walk to and from the parking lot or bus stop.
- Walk the dog for 10 minutes before or after work.
- Add a 10 minute walk at lunchtime or as a replacement for a coffee break.
- Walk up and down courts or fields or around the neighborhood when kids are practicing sports.
- Do stretches or exercises while watching television.
- Actively play with kids after school or in the evening.
- Get up 15 minutes early and use this time for a run, walk, sit-ups and push-ups, or stretching.
- Turn chores into exercise. Set the timer for 20 minutes and see how much of the house you can clean. Try to be as efficient and quick-paced as possible.

What can we do when it's cold outside?

- Shovel snow or go ice-skating, snow-shoeing, or sledding.
- Invest in a few small pieces of exercise equipment like a rubber exercise band, light hand weights, or a jump rope and use these for indoor exercise.
- Do calisthenics. These exercises use your own body weight to increase your strength. Examples include push-ups, sit-ups, and jumping jacks. Look up a detailed plan so you can vary the exercises, speed, and intensity.
- Some school gyms offer times for community members to walk, work out, or play basketball. Check to see if your community has any free or low cost indoor exercise options.
- If you have access at home to the internet, work out to free exercise videos. You may be able to check out exercise DVDs from your local library.

What can we do for physical activity as a family?

- Plan active family gatherings and celebrations. Take a walk or hike together, shoot hoops, or play catch, Frisbee, or other active games.
- Enjoy an afternoon bike ride as a family.
- Walk or bike to school together.
- Try physical participation video games.
- Play together at a playground.
- Set up an obstacle course.
- Play with a deck of cards. Decide on an exercise for each suit (hearts, diamonds, spades, clubs) and take turns picking cards and performing the exercise the number of times indicated on the card. (For example, if jumping jacks were assigned to spades, a 10 of spades would mean 10 jumping jacks.) Do the exercises together or tag team.
- Put on some music and have a dance party!

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