

An active way to better health.

NATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
GUIDELINES FOR ADULTS



This brochure sets out four steps to better health for Australian adults.

Together, guidelines 1-3 recommend the minimum amount of physical activity you need to do to enhance your health. They are not intended for high-level fitness, sports training or weight loss. **To achieve the best results, try to carry out all three guidelines and combine an active lifestyle with healthy eating.**

Guideline 4 is for those who are able, and wish, to achieve greater health and fitness benefits.

- 1 Think of movement as an opportunity, not an inconvenience.**
- 2 Be active every day in as many ways as you can.**
- 3 Put together at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days.**
- 4 If you can, also enjoy some regular, vigorous activity for extra health and fitness.**

Regular physical activity can:

- * help prevent heart disease, stroke and high blood pressure;
- * reduce the risk of developing type II diabetes and some cancers;
- * help build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints reducing the risk of injury; and
- * promote psychological well-being.

Guideline 1

THINK OF MOVEMENT AS AN OPPORTUNITY, NOT AN INCONVENIENCE.

Where any form of movement of the body is seen as an opportunity for improving health, not as a time-wasting inconvenience.

The need for movement

The human body was designed to move. Over hundreds of thousands of years of evolution, humans have been active in the process of survival; hunting, gathering, farming food, collecting fuel and building shelter.

But the technology of today has reduced much of the opportunity for human movement. Cars now reduce how much we walk. Machines and labour-saving devices carry out work for us both in the workplace and at home. Home entertainment such as TVs, videos, DVDs and computers, can keep us inactive for long periods.

The result is that human movement has been decreasing, but at the same time levels of obesity and other health problems have been increasing.

Changing the way we think about movement

We need to change our attitude toward physical activity if we are serious about our long-term health. If we view all movement as an opportunity, rather than an inconvenience, we will be taking a positive step towards better health and preventing illness. We can enjoy the benefits of modern technology without the negative health consequences.

Guideline 2

BE ACTIVE EVERY DAY IN AS MANY WAYS AS YOU CAN.

Make a habit of walking or cycling instead of using the car, or do things yourself instead of using labour-saving machines.

The increase in effort-saving technology in modern societies has coincided with increasingly busy lifestyles. So, we not only have less opportunity to be active, but seem to have less time. However, it is possible to regain some of the health benefits of regular movement by being more active in everyday life.

Being active in small ways throughout the day is likely to provide health benefits to almost everyone, no matter what your age, body weight, health condition or disability.

Ways to increase activity

Increases in daily activity can come from small changes made throughout your day - they all add up. It is important to remember that some activity is better than none, and more is better than a little.

To make a habit out of increasing activity in your day, you can:

- * Walk or cycle instead of using the car.
- * Park further away from your destination and walk the rest of the way.
- * Walk or cycle to and from your tram/train station or bus stop, and get on and off at a stop that is further away.

- * Take the stairs instead of the lift.
- * Walk rather than rest on escalators or travelators.
- * Work in the garden.
- * Play with children in an active way.
- * Walk or play with pets.
- * Challenge family, friends and work colleagues to be active with you.

Guideline 3

PUT TOGETHER AT LEAST 30 MINUTES OF MODERATE-INTENSITY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ON MOST, PREFERABLY ALL, DAYS.

You can accumulate your 30 minutes (or more) throughout the day by combining a few shorter sessions of activity of around 10 to 15 minutes each.

Moderate-intensity activity isn't hard!

Moderate-intensity activity will cause a slight, but noticeable, increase in your breathing and heart rate. A good example of moderate-intensity activity is brisk walking, that is at a pace where you are able to comfortably talk but not sing. Other examples include mowing the lawn, digging in the garden, or medium-paced swimming or cycling.

Moderate-intensity activity doesn't have to be continuous!

Research has shown that accumulated short bouts of moderate-intensity activity are just as effective as continuous activity at improving indicators of health such as blood pressure and blood cholesterol.

So you can:

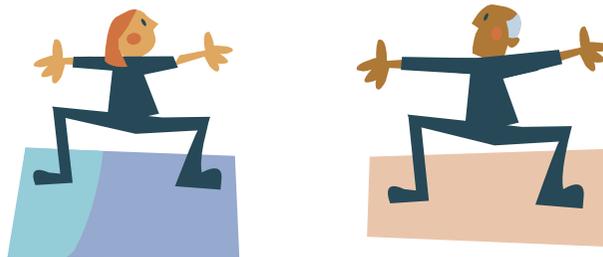
- * accumulate your 30 minutes or more throughout the day by combining a few shorter sessions of activity of around 10 to 15 minutes each; or
- * do 30 minutes or more continuously.

Moderate-intensity activity should, however, be carried out for at least 10 minutes at a time without stopping.

For best results combine an active lifestyle with healthy eating

In general, this means eating a wide variety of nutritious foods including plenty of vegetables, legumes, fruits, breads and cereals (preferably wholegrain).

It also involves choosing foods that are low in fat (particularly saturated fat), salt and include only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugar. If you drink alcohol, limiting your intake is recommended. More information on healthy eating and the Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults can be obtained from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.



Guideline 4

IF YOU CAN, ALSO ENJOY SOME REGULAR, VIGOROUS ACTIVITY FOR EXTRA HEALTH AND FITNESS.

This guideline does not replace Guidelines 1-3. Rather, it adds an extra level for those who are able, and wish, to achieve greater health and fitness benefits.

Vigorous activity

Research has shown that people who participate in regular vigorous activity can get health and fitness benefits over and above the benefits they get from increasing daily movement or regular moderate-intensity activity. This includes extra protection against heart disease.

How hard is vigorous activity?

"Vigorous" implies activity that makes you "huff and puff", for example where talking in full sentences between breaths is difficult. Vigorous activity can come from sports such as football, squash, netball and basketball and activities such as aerobics, circuit training, speed walking, jogging, fast cycling or brisk rowing. For best results, this type of activity should be carried out for a minimum of around 30 minutes, three to four days a week.

Seeking medical advice

Although there's no age barrier to carrying out vigorous activity, medical advice is recommended for those who have been previously inactive, who have heart disease, have close relatives with heart disease, or who have other major health problems. Vigorous activity in pregnancy is not recommended without strict medical supervision.

Warm-up, cool-down, stretching and a gradual build-up from an inactive level are also recommended with vigorous activity, in line with most recommended fitness training programs.

For more information

www.healthactive.gov.au

Other resources that you may find useful include:

Everyone wants to be more active. The problem is getting started.

Australia's Physical Activity Recommendations for 5-12 year olds

Australia's Physical Activity Recommendations for 12-18 year olds

Food for Health, Australian Dietary Guidelines for Adults, Children and Adolescents

Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

Each of these can be obtained by calling 1800 020 103 and asking for the PHD publications request line.

National Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults has been developed through extensive consultations with a wide range of experts in physical activity by the University of Western Australia and the Centre for Health Promotion and Research, Sydney, for the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (formerly the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care).

GET HEALTHY. GET ACTIVE.

Building a healthy, active Australia.

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