

2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans At-A-Glance

The *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* are needed because of the importance of physical activity to the health of Americans. The latest information shows that inactivity among Americans remains relatively high, and little progress has been made to increase levels of physical activity.

Key Guidelines for Adults

Substantial health benefits are gained by doing physical activity according to the Guidelines for adults provided below:

- Adults should do 2 hours and 30 minutes a week of moderate-intensity, or 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity. Aerobic activity should be performed in episodes of at least 10 minutes, preferably spread throughout the week.
- Additional health benefits are provided by increasing to 5 hours (300 minutes) a week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity, or 2 hours and 30 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both.
- Adults should also do muscle-strengthening activities that involve all major muscle groups performed on 2 or more days per week.

For all individuals, some activity is better than none. Physical activity is safe for almost everyone, and the health benefits of physical activity far outweigh the risks. People without diagnosed chronic conditions (*e.g.*, diabetes, heart disease, osteoarthritis) or symptoms (*e.g.*, chest pain or pressure, dizziness, joint pain) do not need to consult with a health care provider about physical activity.



Health Benefits of Physical Activity According to the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines	
Strong Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lower risk of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Early death. ○ Heart disease. ○ Stroke. ○ Type 2 diabetes. ○ High blood pressure. ○ Adverse blood lipid profile. ○ Metabolic syndrome. ○ Colon and breast cancers. ■ Prevention of weight gain. ■ Weight loss when combined with diet. ■ Improved cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness. ■ Prevention of falls. ■ Reduced depression. ■ Better cognitive function (older adults).
Moderate to Strong Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Better functional health (older adults). ■ Reduced abdominal obesity.
Moderate Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Weight maintenance after weight loss. ■ Lower risk of hip fracture. ■ Increased bone density. ■ Improved sleep quality. ■ Lower risk of lung and endometrial cancers.

Overview of the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

Being physically active is one of the most important steps that Americans of all ages can take to improve their health. The *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* provides science-based guidance to help Americans aged 6 years and older improve their health through appropriate physical activity.

These guidelines are designed to provide information and guidance on the types and amounts of physical activity that provide substantial health benefits. This information may be useful to interested members of the public. The main idea behind the guidelines is that regular physical activity over months and years can produce long-term health benefits. Realizing these benefits requires physical activity each week.

The *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* describes the major research findings on the health benefits of physical activity:

- Regular physical activity reduces the risk of many adverse health outcomes.
- Some physical activity is better than none.
- For most health outcomes, additional benefits occur as the amount of physical activity increases through higher intensity, greater frequency, or longer duration.
- Most health benefits occur with at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking. Additional benefits occur with more physical activity.
- Both aerobic (endurance) and muscle-strengthening (resistance) physical activity are beneficial.
- Health benefits occur for children and adolescents, young and middle-aged adults, older adults, and those in every studied racial and ethnic group.
- The health benefits of physical activity occur for people with disabilities.
- The benefits of physical activity far outweigh the possibility of adverse outcomes.



Resources

The following are key guidelines included in the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans:

Key Guidelines for Adults

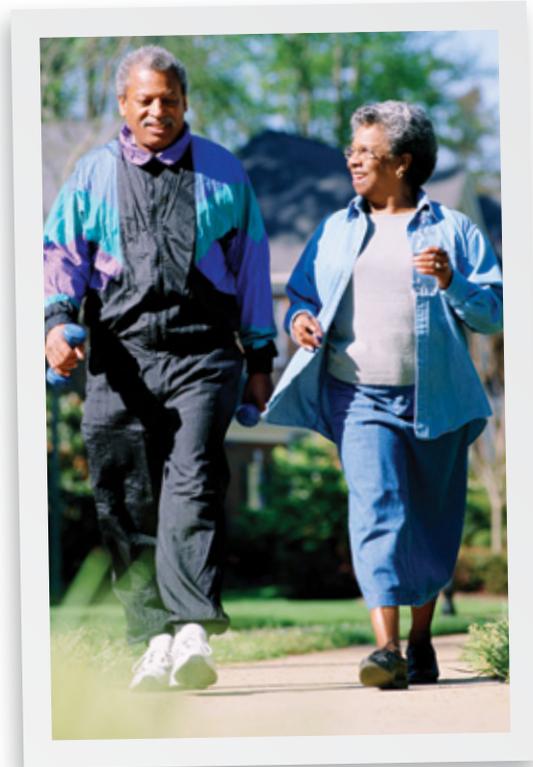
- All adults should avoid inactivity. Some physical activity is better than none, and adults who participate in any amount of physical activity gain some health benefits.
- For substantial health benefits, adults should do at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity. Aerobic activity should be performed in episodes of at least 10 minutes and preferably spread throughout the week.
- For additional and more extensive health benefits, adults should increase their aerobic physical activity to 300 minutes (5 hours) a week of moderate-intensity, or 150 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity. Additional health benefits are gained by engaging in physical activity beyond this amount.
- Adults should also do muscle-strengthening activities that are moderate- or high-intensity and involve all major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week as these activities provide additional health benefits.



Key Guidelines for Older Adults

The Key Guidelines for Adults also apply to older adults. In addition, the following guidelines are just for older adults:

- When older adults cannot do 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week because of chronic conditions, they should be as physically active as their abilities and conditions allow.
- Older adults should do exercises that maintain or improve balance if they are at risk of falling.
- Older adults should determine their level of effort for physical activity relative to their level of fitness.
- Older adults with chronic conditions should understand whether and how their conditions affect their ability to do regular physical activity safely.



Key Guidelines for Women during Pregnancy and the Postpartum Period

- Healthy women who are not already highly active or doing vigorous-intensity activity should get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week during pregnancy and the postpartum period. Preferably, this activity should be spread throughout the week.
- Pregnant women who habitually engage in vigorous-intensity aerobic activity or who are highly active can continue physical activity during pregnancy and the postpartum period provided that they remain healthy and discuss with their health care provider how and when activity should be adjusted over time.

Key Guidelines for Adults with Disabilities

- Adults with disabilities who are able should get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity. Aerobic activity should be performed in episodes of at least 10 minutes and preferably spread throughout the week.
- Adults with disabilities who are able should also do muscle-strengthening activities of moderate- or high-intensity that involve all major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week as these activities provide additional health benefits.

Resources

- When adults with disabilities are not able to meet the guidelines, they should engage in regular physical activity according to their abilities and should avoid inactivity.
- Adults with disabilities should consult their health care provider about the amounts and types of physical activity that are appropriate for their abilities.

Key Messages for People with Chronic Medical Conditions

- Adults with chronic conditions obtain important health benefits from regular physical activity.
- When adults with chronic conditions do activity according to their abilities, physical activity is safe.
- Adults with chronic conditions should be under the care of a health care provider. People with chronic conditions and symptoms should consult their health care provider about the types and amounts of activity appropriate for them.

The U.S. National Physical Activity Plan

The U.S. National Physical Activity Plan is a comprehensive set of policies, programs, and initiatives that aim to increase physical activity in all segments of the American population. The Plan is the product of a private-public sector collaborative. Hundreds of organizations are working together to change our communities in ways that will enable every American to be sufficiently physically active. The Plan aims to create a national culture that supports physically active lifestyles. Its ultimate purpose is to improve health, prevent disease and disability, and enhance quality of life.

The Plan focuses on making recommendations to eight different sectors in society:

- Business and industry
- Education
- Health care
- Mass media
- Parks, recreation, fitness and sports
- Public health
- Transportation, land use, and community design
- Volunteer and non-profit

Approaches on how to leverage each sector to increase physical activities are offered. For more information on the National Physical Activity Plan can be found at www.physicalactivityplan.org.