

Health

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Get moving and stay moving if you want better health

The new physical activity recommendations for adults and older adults were recently released by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and the American Heart Association (AHA). More than 10 years of research has contributed to the update of the guidelines, which were last issued in 1995. The updated guidelines explicitly state what all healthy adults and older adults should do to maintain health and, in turn, quality of life.

The ACSM and AHA recommend that all healthy adults age 18-65 do moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity for at least 30 minutes five days a week or vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity for at least 20 minutes three days each week.

It is recommended that adults perform eight to 10 exercises on two non-consecutive days in order to maintain or increase muscular strength and endurance. To maximize strength development, a weight should be used for eight to 12 repetitions of each exercise, resulting in fatigue. You can exercise anywhere, and engaging in this amount of physical activity doesn't require anything special other than a little motivation and a good pair of tennis shoes. The point is to keep moving and stay moving.

In addition, the ACSM and AHA have released guidelines specifically for adults older than 65, or adults older than 50 with chronic conditions or physical limitations from conditions such as arthritis. Recommendations for older adults are the same as for younger adults, with the addition of increased strength training, balance exercises for older adults at risk of falling and a physical activity plan developed with a health care professional.

The updated recommendations for adults are improved from the previous guidelines by stating, very specifically:

1. Adults need to engage in physical activity a minimum of five days a week.
2. Adults can engage in moderate- and/or vigorous-intensity physical activity, depending on their preference.
3. Aerobic activity is needed in addition to routine activities of daily life.
4. "More is better." This new recommendation emphasizes the important fact that physical activity above the recommended minimum amount provides even greater health benefits.
5. It is acceptable to have short bouts of exercise, not shorter than 10 minutes each, adding up to the 30-minute goal per day.
6. Muscle-strengthening activities need to be incorporated into the physical activity.

With busy work schedules, family obligations and packed weekends, it can often be difficult to get the recommended amount of physical activity. Try these tips for incorporating exercise into your life:

1. **Mix it up:** Combine moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity. For example, try walking briskly for 30 minutes twice per week and jog at a higher intensity on two other days.
2. **Set your schedule:** Maybe it's easier for you to walk during your lunch hour or right after dinner. The key is to set aside specific days and times for exercise, making it just as much a regular part of your schedule as everything else.
3. **Make it a family affair:** Take your spouse, your children or a friend with you during exercise to add some fun to your routine. Also, encourage your kids to be physically active and get them committed early to a lifetime of good health.
4. **Do it in short bouts:** If you can exercise only for 10 minutes now, 10 minutes in the midday and 10 minutes in the evening, that's fine. That adds up to 30 minutes, and that's better than not exercising at all.

Exercise through doing the things you love, like playing basketball, in-line skating or simply going for a walk. It's worth the end reward: a longer, healthier, happier life.