

# 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

## At-A-Glance:

### A Fact Sheet for Professionals

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans At-A-Glance: A Fact Sheet for Professionals is designed for busy professionals as a quick desk-side reference to the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

These Guidelines are needed because of the importance of physical activity to the health of Americans, whose current inactivity puts them at unnecessary risk. The latest information shows that inactivity among American children, adolescents, and adults remains relatively high, and little progress has been made in increasing levels of physical activity among Americans.

#### Key Guidelines

Substantial health benefits are gained by doing physical activity according to the Guidelines presented below for different groups.

#### Children and Adolescents (aged 6–17)

- Children and adolescents should do 1 hour (60 minutes) or more of physical activity every day.
- Most of the 1 hour or more a day should be either moderate- or vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity.
- As part of their daily physical activity, children and adolescents should do vigorous-intensity activity on at least 3 days per week. They also should do muscle-strengthening and bone-strengthening activity on at least 3 days per week.

#### Adults With Disabilities

Follow the adult guidelines. If this is not possible, these persons should be as physically active as their abilities allow. They should avoid inactivity.

#### Children and Adolescents With Disabilities

Work with the child's health care provider to identify the types and amounts of physical activity appropriate for them. When possible, these children should meet the guidelines for children and adolescents—or as much activity as their condition allows. Children and adolescents should avoid being inactive.

#### Pregnant and Postpartum Women

Healthy women who are not already doing vigorous-intensity physical activity should get at least 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week. Preferably, this activity should be spread throughout the week. Women who regularly engage in vigorous-intensity aerobic activity or high amounts of activity can continue their activity provided that their condition remains unchanged and they talk to their health care provider about their activity level throughout their pregnancy.



[www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines)



# For all individuals, some activity is better than none.

## Adults (aged 18–64)

- 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.

## Older Adults (aged 65 and older)

- Older adults should follow the adult guidelines. If this is not possible due to limiting chronic conditions, older adults should be as physically active as their abilities allow. They should avoid inactivity. Older adults should do exercises that maintain or improve balance if they are at risk of falling.

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 (such as diabetes, heart disease, or osteoarthritis) and who do not have symptoms (e.g., chest pain or pressure, dizziness, or joint pain) do not need to consult with a health care provider about physical activity.



## Health Benefits of Physical Activity—A Review of the Strength of the Scientific Evidence

### Adults and Older Adults

#### Strong Evidence

Lower risk of:

- 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

Better functional health (older adults)

Reduced abdominal obesity

#### Moderate Evidence

Weight maintenance after weight loss

Lower risk of hip fracture

Increased bone density

Improved sleep quality

Lower risk of lung and endometrial cancers

### Children and Adolescents

#### Strong Evidence

Improved cardiorespiratory endurance and muscular fitness

Favorable body composition

Improved bone health

Improved cardiovascular and metabolic health biomarkers

#### Moderate Evidence

Reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression