



# Be Active Your Way

## A Guide for Adults

Based on the 2008 *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*

Be Active, Healthy, and Happy!



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## A Guide for Adults

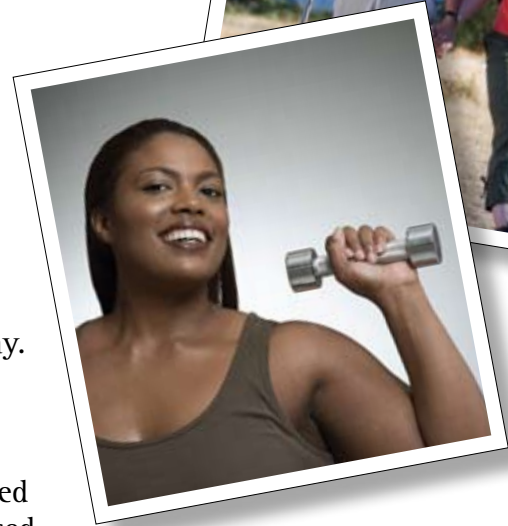
- Wondering about how much activity you need each week?
- Want to get physically active but not sure where to begin?
- Already started a program and would like tips on how to keep it up or step it up?

### Then this booklet is for you.

Read how you can fit physical activity into your life—your way. Decide the number of days, types of activities, and times that fit your schedule.

Written for men and women ages 18 to 64, this booklet is based on the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. When reading, you'll want to pay special attention to the **Advice to Follow** boxes in this booklet. They offer you a quick snapshot of the latest information from these new guidelines.

Share this booklet with your family and friends so you can be active together!



## What is physical activity?

Physical activity is any form of exercise or movement of the body that uses energy. Some of your daily life activities—doing active chores around the house, yard work, walking the dog—are examples.

To get the **health benefits** of physical activity, include activities that make you breathe harder and make your heart and blood vessels healthier. These **aerobic activities** include things like brisk walking, running, dancing, swimming, and playing basketball. Also include **strengthening activities** to make your muscles stronger, like push-ups and lifting weights.

## The good news?

People of all types, shapes, sizes, and abilities can benefit from being physically active. If you have a disability, choose activities in this booklet that work for you. Talk with your health care team about the amount and types of activities that are right for your ability or condition.


## Did you know?

- Some activity is better than none.
- The more you do, the greater the health benefits and the better you'll feel.



## This booklet has 4 parts:

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 **Part 1.** Getting Started .....page 2

 **Part 2.** Making Physical Activity a Part of Your Life .....page 6

 **Part 3.** Keeping It Up, Stepping It Up .....page 10

 **Part 4.** Being Active for Life .....page 14



# To get the most from your physical activity guidebook

## Which one of these seems more like you?

- Read Part 1** if you are **getting started** and want to learn ways to add physical activity to your life. Find out about the many benefits of being active. Hear how others are taking small steps toward better health.
- Read Part 2** if you are **doing just a small amount of physical activity** and want to learn how to become more active.
- Read Part 3** if you've **been active for some time now** and want to raise your activity level. Also, learn how to **avoid injury**.
- Read Part 4** for a **quick summary** of what to do—and how much physical activity you need—to get the benefits of staying active. Use the forms on pages 20 and 21 to track your progress. Tracking helps you stay on course!



# Part 1. Getting Started



## Start slowly

"The employee wellness program at my work just started a new lunchtime walking program. Some of us walk at a good clip, while others move at a slower pace. I get to be outdoors, and I feel more alert on the days I walk."

Thinking about adding physical activity to your life, but not sure how to get started? Sometimes taking the first step is the hardest part.

If you have not been active in some time, start at a comfortable level and add a little more activity as you go along. Some people find that getting active with a friend makes it easier to get started.

## Is something holding you back?

Think about reasons why you have not been physically active. Then try to come up with some ways to get past what is keeping you from getting active.

Have you said to yourself . . . ?

### **I haven't been active in a very long time.**

**Solution:** Choose something you like to do. Many people find walking helps them get started. Before you know it, you will be doing more each day.

### **I don't have the time.**

**Solution:** Start with 10-minute chunks of time a couple of days a week. Walk during a break. Dance in the living room to your favorite music. It all adds up.

**It costs too much.**

**Solution:** You don't have to join a health club or buy fancy equipment to be active. Play tag with your kids. Walk briskly with your dog for 10 minutes or more.

Write down some things you could do to get past what may be holding you back:

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### Feeling good

"I recently bought an exercise bike at a yard sale. I get up early in the morning and ride. It feels good. Sometimes I can squeeze in only 10 minutes before I take off for my job. Even 10 minutes is better than not doing anything."

## What can physical activity do for you?

You may have heard the good things you can gain from regular physical activity.

**Check off which of these benefits you hope to get from active living:**

- Be healthier
- Increase my chances of living longer
  
- Feel better about myself
- Have less chance of becoming depressed
- Sleep better at night
  
- Help me look good
- Be in shape
- Get around better
- Have stronger muscles and bones
- Help me stay at or get to a healthy weight
  
- Be with friends or meet new people
- Enjoy myself and have fun

## Did you know?

When you are **not** physically active, you are more likely to:

- Get heart disease
- Get type 2 diabetes
- Have high blood pressure
- Have high blood cholesterol
- Have a stroke



## Build up over time

**Start by doing what you can, and then look for ways to do more.** If you have not been active for a while, start out slowly. After several weeks or months, build up your activities—do them longer and more often.

**Walking is one way to add physical activity to your life.** When you first start, walk 10 minutes a day on a few days during the first couple of weeks.

**Add more time and days.** Walk a little longer. Try 15 minutes instead of 10 minutes. Then walk on more days a week.

**Pick up the pace.** Once this is easy to do, try walking faster. Keep up your brisk walking for a couple of months. You might want to add biking on the weekends for variety.



## How much physical activity do you need each week?

### Advice to follow:

#### Aerobic

- Adults should get at least **2 hours and 30 minutes** each week of aerobic physical activity that requires **moderate** effort.
- You need to do this type of activity for at least **10 minutes** at a time.

#### Strengthening

- Adults should also do **strengthening** activities at least **2 days** a week.
- Strengthening activities include push-ups, sit-ups and lifting weights (see page 7 for more ideas on what activities to do, how much, and how often).

### Do it your way.

- Pick an activity you like and one that fits into your life.
- Find the time that works best for you.
- Be active with friends and family. Having a support network can help you keep up with your program.
- There are many ways to build the right amount of activity into your life. Every little bit adds up and doing something is better than doing nothing.

**Tip:** To learn how to avoid injury, see page 13.

### Moderate-level activities (check off the ones you will try):

- Biking slowly
- Canoeing
- Dancing
- General gardening (raking, trimming shrubs)
- Tennis (doubles)
- Using your manual wheelchair
- Using hand cyclers—also called arm ergometers
- Walking briskly
- Water aerobics

## Part 2. Making Physical Activity a Part of Your Life



### Doing More

"I started taking a 45-minute water aerobics class with a group of women from church. It's really a lot of fun, and I am getting in shape. I started out going 2 days a week, and now my goal is to make it to all 3 classes a week."

Congratulations! You are doing some regular physical activity each week and are ready to do more. You may be feeling the benefits of getting active, such as having fun with friends, sleeping better, and getting toned. Are you looking for ways to do more activities at a moderate level?

### Here are 2 examples for adding more activity

1. You can do more by being active **longer** each time. Walking for 30 minutes, 3 times a week? **Go longer**—walk for 50 minutes, 3 times a week.
2. You can do more, by being active **more often**. Are you biking lightly 3 days a week for 25 minutes each time? Increase the number of days you bike. **Work up to** riding 6 days a week for 25 minutes each time.

**Tip:** If you have not been this active in the past, work your way up. In time, replace some moderate activities with vigorous activities that take more effort. These are explained in detail on page 11, in Part 3.

## Activities for stronger muscles and bones

### Advice to follow:

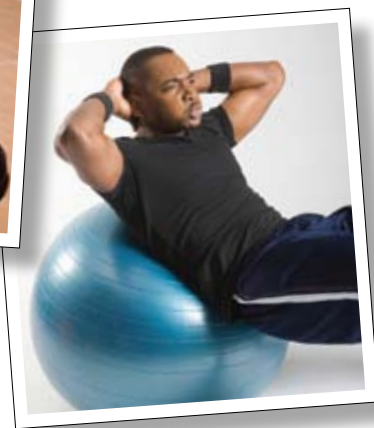
Adults should do activities to **strengthen** muscles and bones at least **2 days a week**.

Choose activities that work all the different parts of the body—your legs, hips, back, chest, stomach, shoulders, and arms. Exercises for each muscle group should be repeated 8 to 12 times per session.

Try some of these activities a couple of days a week:

- Heavy gardening (digging, shoveling)
- Lifting weights
- Push-ups on the floor or against the wall
- Sit-ups
- Working with resistance bands (long, wide rubber strips that stretch)

**Tip:** Some people like resistance bands because they find them easy to use and put away when they are done. Others prefer weights; you can use common grocery items, such as bags of rice, vegetable or soup cans, or bottled water.



## For best success

- Team up with a friend. It will keep you motivated and be more fun.
- Pick activities that you like to do.
- Track your time and progress. It helps you stay on course. Fill in the forms on pages 20 and 21 to help set your activity goals. Before you know it, you'll be able to do at least **2 hours and 30 minutes** of activities at a moderate level each week.
- Add in more strength-building activities over time. For example, you can do sit-ups or push-ups.



## Shaping up

"My son and I play in a baseball league twice a week. On the days we play, I sleep much better at night. This makes me want to do more on other days. My son wants to lift weights together, and so we got some weights and work out in the basement."



## Planning your activity for the week

Physical activity experts say that spreading aerobic activity out over at least 3 days a week is best. Also, do each activity for at least 10 minutes at a time. There are many ways to fit in **2 hours and 30 minutes** a week. For example, you can do 30 minutes of aerobic activity each day, for 5 days.

On the other 2 days, do activities to keep your muscles strong. Find ways that work well for you.

## Want to learn more about how to add physical activity to your life?

- Join a fitness group.
- Talk to your health care provider about good activities to try.
- Speak to the worksite wellness coordinator at your job.
- Visit **www.healthfinder.gov** and type “activity” in the search box.

**Tip:** To learn how to avoid injury, see page 13.



## Part 3. Keeping It Up, Stepping It Up



### Good habits!

"My friends and I have been walking at the mall 4 mornings a week for the past 6 months. We walk for 45 minutes each time, for a total of 3 hours a week. Our goal is to reach 5 hours a week. Sure, some mornings it is tough to get out of bed early to walk. But once I'm there, I am glad."

### Adding more time

Already doing **2 hours and 30 minutes** a week of aerobic physical activity? Good for you! Do you want to gain even more health benefits from physical activity? Slowly add more time to your weekly routine.

Strive to double your weekly activity time. Work to be active **5 or more hours** each week. This activity level can lower your chances of getting breast and colon cancer. Read the next page to find out how to add more effort.

### Gaining more health benefits!

#### Advice to follow:

To get **more health benefits**, add **more time** of aerobic physical activity.

- Try to move from **2 hours and 30 minutes** of moderate-level activities a week to **5 hours** or more a week.

## Adding more effort

Instead of doing only moderate-level activities, replace some with **vigorous** aerobic activities that will make your heart beat even faster. Adding vigorous activities provides benefits in less activity time. In general, 15 minutes of vigorous activity provides the same benefits as 30 minutes of moderate activity.

Have you been **walking** for 30 minutes 5 days a week? On 2 days, try **jogging** instead of walking for 15 minutes each time. Keep on walking for 30 minutes on the other 3 days.

Would you like to have **stronger muscles**? If you have been doing strengthening activities 2 days a week, try adding an extra day.

## Mix it up!

You can do all moderate activities, all vigorous activities, or some of each. You should always start with moderate activities and then add vigorous activities little by little.

To mix it up, you can try 30 minutes of biking fast to and from your job 3 days a week. Then play softball for 60 minutes 1 day. Then lift weights for 2 days.

You've mixed vigorous aerobic activity (biking fast) with moderate aerobic activity (softball) and activities for stronger muscles (weights).

To add more effort, try some vigorous activities (check off the ones you will try):

- Aerobic dance
- Basketball
- Fast dancing
- Jumping rope
- Martial arts (such as karate)
- Race walking, jogging, or running
- Riding a bike on hills or riding faster
- Soccer
- Swimming fast or swimming laps
- Tennis (singles)

You can choose moderate or vigorous activities, or a mix of both each week

## Advice to follow:

You should do at least **2 hours and 30 minutes** each week of aerobic physical activity at a **moderate** level.

OR

You should do at least **1 hour and 15 minutes** each week of aerobic physical activity at a **vigorous** level.

### Do it your way!

You can replace **some or all** of your moderate activity with vigorous activity. With vigorous activities, you get similar health benefits in **half the time** it takes you with moderate ones.

### Muscle strengthening activities

Remember to also do strengthening activities on **2 or more days** a week.

### Adding more time

Strive to double your weekly activity time. Work to be active **5 or more hours** each week for even more health benefits.





# For Everyone: Staying Safe and Avoiding Injury

Physical activity is generally safe for everyone. People who are physically fit have **less** chance of injury than those who are not fit. The health benefits you gain from being active are far greater than the chances of getting hurt. Being inactive is definitely not good for your health.

**Here are some things you can do to stay safe while you are active:**

- If you haven't been active in a while, start slowly and build up.
- Learn about the types and amounts of activity that are right for you.
- Choose activities that are appropriate for your fitness level.

- Build up the time you spend before switching to activities that take more effort.
- Use the right safety gear and sports equipment.
- Choose a safe place to do your activity.
- See a health care provider if you have a health problem.



# Part 4. Being Active for Life

## Finding out what kind and how much physical activity you need

### How do I do it?

It's your choice. Pick an activity that's easy to fit into your life. Do at least 10 minutes of physical activity at a time. Choose **aerobic** activities that work for you. These make your heart beat faster and can make your heart, lungs, and blood vessels stronger and more fit. Also, do **strengthening** activities which make your muscles do more work than usual.

### Why should I be physically active?

Physical activity can make you feel stronger and more alive. It is a fun way to be with your family or friends. It also helps you improve your health.

### How many times a week should I be physically active?

It is up to you, but it is better to spread your activity throughout the week and to be active at least 3 days a week.

### How do I build up more physical activity?

Do a little more each time. Once you feel comfortable, do it more often. Then you can trade activities at a moderate level for vigorous ones that take more effort. You can do moderate and vigorous activities in the same week.



## How much physical activity do I need to do?

This chart tells you about the activities that are important for you to do. Do **both** aerobic activities and strengthening activities. Each offers important health benefits. And remember, some physical activity is better than none!

### Aerobic Activities

If you choose activities at a **moderate** level, do at least **2 hours and 30 minutes** a week.

If you choose **vigorous** activities, do at least **1 hour and 15 minutes** a week.

- Slowly build up the amount of time you do physical activities. The more time you spend, the more health benefits you gain. Aim for twice the amount of activity in the box above.
- Do at least 10 minutes at a time.
- You can combine moderate and vigorous activities.

### Muscle Strengthening Activities

Do these at least **2 days** a week.

- Include all the major muscle groups such as legs, hips, back, chest, stomach, shoulders, and arms.
- Exercises for each muscle group should be repeated 8 to 12 times per session.

## How can I tell an activity at a moderate level from a vigorous one?

Vigorous activities take more effort than moderate ones. Here are just a few moderate and vigorous aerobic physical activities. Do these for **10 minutes or more** at a time.

### Moderate Activities

(I can talk while I do them, but I can't sing.)

- Ballroom and line dancing
- Biking on level ground or with few hills
- Canoeing
- General gardening (raking, trimming shrubs)
- Sports where you catch and throw (baseball, softball, volleyball)
- Tennis (doubles)
- Using your manual wheelchair
- Using hand cyclers—also called ergometers
- Walking briskly
- Water aerobics

### Vigorous Activities

(I can only say a few words without stopping to catch my breath.)

- Aerobic dance
- Biking faster than 10 miles per hour
- Fast dancing
- Heavy gardening (digging, hoeing)
- Hiking uphill
- Jumping rope
- Martial arts (such as karate)
- Race walking, jogging, or running
- Sports with a lot of running (basketball, hockey, soccer)
- Swimming fast or swimming laps
- Tennis (singles)

# Keeping track of what you do each week

Make copies of the forms on pages 20 and 21 to write down your goals and track your activities each week. There are examples on pages 18 and 19.

The first form is for aerobic activities. The second form is for strengthening activities. Be active **your way** by choosing activities you enjoy!



## Tracking works!

"I made a copy of the tracking forms and keep them handy to fill out each day. Know what? When I fill out the forms—it's easier to reach my weekly goal."



## Example: My aerobic activities this week

My goal is to do aerobic activities for a total of 2 hours and 30 minutes this week.

What I did	Effort	When I did it and for how long							Total hours or minutes
		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	
<i>Walked</i>	<i>Moderate</i>		<i>30 min</i>	<i>30 min</i>		<i>30 min</i>		<i>30 min</i>	<i>2 hours</i>
<i>Biked fast</i>	<i>Vigorous</i>						<i>30 min</i>		<i>30 min</i>
This is the total number of hours or minutes I did these activities this week:									<i>2 hours and 30 min</i>

## Example: My strengthening activities this week

My goal is to do strengthening activities for a total of 2 days this week.

What I did	When I did it							Total days
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	
<i>Sit-ups</i>	<i>Yes</i>							<i>1 day</i>
<i>Stretch bands</i>				<i>Yes</i>				<i>1 day</i>
This is the total number of days I did these activities this week:								<i>2 days</i>

## My aerobic activities this week

My goal is to do aerobic activities for a total of \_\_\_\_\_ hours and \_\_\_\_\_ minutes this week.

What I did	Effort	When I did it and for how long							Total hours or minutes
		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	
This is the total number of hours or minutes I did these activities this week:									



## My strengthening activities this week

My goal is to do strengthening activities for a total of \_\_\_\_\_ days this week.

What I did	When I did it							Total days
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	
This is the total number of days I did these activities this week:								







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You can find more advice on physical activity at:  
[www.healthfinder.gov/getactive](http://www.healthfinder.gov/getactive)