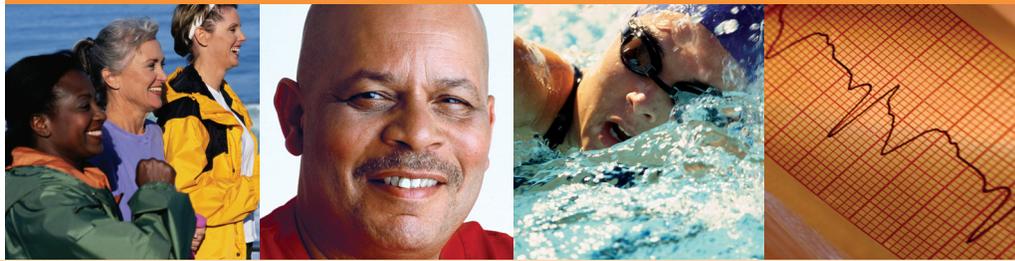


AT-A-GLANCE:



Physical Activity and Your Heart

Physical activity is part of a healthy lifestyle. It's good for many parts of your body and can lower your risk for many health problems.

Many Americans aren't active enough. The good news, though, is that even modest amounts of physical activity are good for your health, especially your heart health. The more active you are, the more you will benefit.

Types of Physical Activity

The four main types of physical activity are aerobic, muscle-strengthening, bone strengthening, and stretching.

- **Aerobic** activity is the type of physical activity that benefits your heart the most. This type of activity moves your large muscles and makes your heart beat faster than usual. Running, swimming, and dancing are aerobic activities.
- **Muscle-strengthening** activities improve the strength, power, and endurance of your muscles. Doing pushups and situps, lifting weights, and climbing stairs are muscle-strengthening activities.
- With **bone-strengthening** activities, your feet, legs, or arms support your body's weight, and your muscles push against your bones. Running, walking, and jumping rope are bone-strengthening activities.
- **Stretching** helps improve your flexibility and your ability to move your joints. Touching your toes, doing side stretches, and doing yoga are examples of stretching.

You can do physical activity with light, moderate, or vigorous intensity. The level of intensity depends on how hard you have to work to do the activity.

To do the same activity, people who are less fit usually have to work harder than people who are more fit. So, what is light-intensity activity for one person may be moderate-intensity for another.

Physical Activity Recommendations

Doing some physical activity is better than doing none. People gain some health benefits from as little as 60 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week.

For major health benefits, adults should do at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity each week. Another option is to do a combination of both.

You don't have to do the activity all at once. You can break it up into shorter periods of at least 10 minutes each.

If you have a heart problem or chronic disease, talk to your doctor about what types of physical activity are safe for you. You also should talk to your doctor about safe physical activities if you have symptoms such as chest pain or dizziness.

Benefits of Physical Activity

One of the major benefits of physical activity, particularly aerobic, is that it reduces coronary heart disease risk factors. (Risk factors are conditions or habits that make it more likely that you will develop a disease.) Some risk factors, such as age and family history, can't be controlled. But lack of physical activity is a major risk factor that you can control.



Doing physical activity regularly can directly reduce your heart disease risk and your chances of developing other heart disease risk factors, such as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes, and overweight or obesity. In fact, inactive people are nearly twice as likely to develop heart disease as those who are more active.

If you already have heart disease, regular aerobic physical activity can help your heart work better and may reduce the risk of a heart attack.

Physical activity also has many other benefits. It can strengthen your heart and improve lung function, and it may help prevent certain types of cancer. Physical activity also tones and strengthens your muscles, builds your stamina, keeps your joints in good condition, improves your balance, may slow bone loss, and can improve your emotional health.

Getting Started and Staying Active

Physical activity is part of a healthy lifestyle that also includes staying at a healthy weight, following a healthy diet, and not smoking. To get started and stay active, do activities that you enjoy and make them part of your daily routine.

If you haven't been active in a while, start slowly and build up over time. Make everyday tasks more active, such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Be active with friends and family, and keep track of your progress.

Learn More

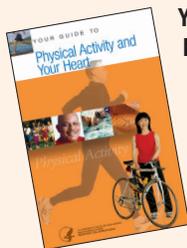
More information about physical activity is available from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) Web site at www.nhlbi.nih.gov (under Health Information for the Public). Podcasts and Spanish-language articles also can be found in the online Diseases and Conditions Index at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci.

You also can order or download information on physical activity from the NHLBI Web site or by calling the NHLBI Health Information Center at 301-592-8573 (TTY: 240-629-3255).

Also see the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' "2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans" and "Be Active Your Way: A Guide for Adults" at www.health.gov/PAGuidelines/.

Want More Information?

These NHLBI publications will help you reach your physical activity goals!



Your Guide to Physical Activity and Your Heart (#06-5714)

This easy-to-read booklet uses science-based information to help adults develop a safe and effective program of physical activity that can be sustained. \$3.50 each

In Brief: Your Guide to Physical Activity and Your Heart (#06-5847)

Critical messages from "Your Guide to Physical Activity and Your Heart" are provided in this easy-to-read fact sheet. \$1.25 each



Also of interest:

- **Aim for a Healthy Weight Patient Booklet (#05-5213)**
This booklet for adults provides practical, easy-to-use guidance for losing and maintaining weight. \$3 each
- **We Can! Families Finding the Balance: A Parent Handbook (#08-5273 English, #05-5274 Spanish)**
Learn fun and practical tips to help your family find the right balance of eating well and being physically active to maintain a healthy weight with this colorful, easy-to-read handbook. \$1.50 each



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health



National Heart
Lung and Blood Institute

NIH Publication No. 09-7425
August 2009

To Order: Visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov or <http://email.nhlbihin.net> or call 301-592-8573