

Healthy Living

Tips for Physical Activity



*All information derived from American Heart Association web site

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Physical Activity in Your Daily Life

At Home

It's convenient, comfortable and safe to work out at home. It allows your children to see you being active, which sets a good example for them. You can combine exercise with other activities, such as watching TV. If you buy exercise equipment, it's a one-time expense and other family members can use it. It's easy to have short bouts of activity several times a day. Try these tips:

- Work in the garden or mow the grass (using a riding mower doesn't count!) pick up trash in the yard.
- Go out for a short walk before breakfast, after dinner or both. Start out with 5-10 minutes, and work your way up to 30 minutes.
- Walk or bike to the corner grocery store instead of driving.
- When walking, pick up the pace from leisurely to brisk. Choose a hilly route. When watching TV, spend a few minutes pedaling your stationary bicycle, throw away your video remote control and get up off of the couch to change your own channels and get your own snacks.
- Stand up while talking on the phone.
- Walk the dog.
- Park farther away at the shopping mall and walk the extra distance. Wear your walking shoes and sneak in an extra lap or two around the mall.
- Keep exercise equipment repaired and use it!

At the Office

Most of us have sedentary jobs. Work takes up a significant part of the day. To increase your activity during the work day, you could:

- Brainstorm project ideas with a co-worker while taking a walk.
- Walk down the hall to speak with someone rather than using the telephone.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Or get off the elevator a few floors early and take the stairs from there.
- Walk while waiting for the plane at the airport.
- Stay at hotels with fitness centers or swimming pools and use them while on business trips.
- Take along a jump rope in your suitcase when traveling, use it or do calisthenics in your hotel room.
- Participate in or start a recreation league at your company.
- Form a sports team to raise money for charity events.
- Join a fitness center near your job on the way to or from work to avoid rush-hour traffic, or drop by for a noon workout. Walk during breaks.
- Schedule exercise time on your business calendar and follow it.
- Get off the bus a few blocks early and walk the rest of the way to work or home.

Women who don't exercise have twice the chance of dying from heart disease as women who do exercise. Similarly, women who smoke double their chances of dying from heart disease when compared to women who don't smoke. Women may live longer than men, but they don't necessarily live better. Elderly women who haven't been physically active experience more disability in their daily functioning than women who've been active.

Q: I am a senior citizen. Is it too late for me to become physically active? Should I take special precautions?

A: More and more seniors are proving every day that they aren't too old to exercise. In fact, the older you are, the more you need regular exercise. However, you should take some special precautions:

- If you have a family history of heart disease, check with your doctor first.
- Don't try to do too much too fast.
- Exercise at an intensity appropriate for you.
- Pick activities that are fun, suit your needs and you can do year-round.
- Wear comfortable clothing and footwear.
- Choose a well-lighted, safe place with a smooth, soft surface.
- Take more time to warm up before and cool down after your workout.
- Don't rely on your sense of thirst; drink water on a fixed schedule.

Q: As a parent, how can I make sure that my children are physically fit?

A: Set a good example by practicing heart-healthy habits yourself. Limit sedentary activities such as TV, movies, videos and computer games to no more than 2 hours a day. Plan active family outings and vacations. Assign household chores (mowing lawns, raking leaves, scrubbing floors, etc.) that require physical exertion. Observe what sports and activities appeal to your children, then encourage their development with lessons or by joining teams. If it's safe to walk or bike rather than drive, do so. Use stairs instead of elevators and escalators. Make sure that your children's physical activities at school or in daycare are adequate. When your children are bored, suggest something that gets them moving – play catch or build a snowman!

Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Health: Q and A

Q: If I exercise, will I prevent heart disease?

A: Physical inactivity, along with cigarette smoking, high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol, is one of the major modifiable risk factors for heart attack. There is no guarantee that you won't get heart disease, but you'll reduce your chance of heart disease if you avoid the risk factors.

Q: I have been inactive for years. Shouldn't I see a doctor before I start becoming physically active?

A: People middle-aged or older who are inactive and at high risk for heart disease (or who already have a medical condition) should seek medical advice before they start or significantly increase their physical activity. Most apparently healthy people of any age can safely engage in moderate levels of physical activity (e.g., moderate walking, gardening, yard work) without consulting a doctor first.

Q: How much physical activity is enough?

A: If you're inactive, doing anything is better than nothing! Studies show that people who have a low fitness level are much more likely to die early than people who have achieved even a moderate level of fitness. If you want to exceed a moderate level of fitness, you need to exercise for 30-60 minutes, on most days of the week, at 50-80% of your maximum capacity.

Q: Is exercise safe?

A: The potential health benefits of exercise greatly outweigh the risk, although there is a very slight increased risk of death due to heart attack during vigorous exercise. Consult your doctor first if you have any concerns, have been sedentary, are overweight, are middle-aged or older or have a medical condition.

Q: Do I need to do vigorous exercise?

A: To achieve health benefits, no. Doing moderate-level activities often will help lower your health risks. If you want to attain a high level of cardiovascular fitness, you need to gradually work up to exercising on most days of the week for 30-60 minutes at 50-80% of your maximum capacity.

Q: Does exercise counteract the harmful effects of other risk factors?

A: Studies show that being physically fit lowers heart disease risk even in people who have other health problems such as high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol. To minimize risk, however, you should be physically fit and avoid the other major risk factors you can do something about: cigarette smoke, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and overweight.

Q: Do women get the same benefits from exercise as men?

A: Most studies showing the positive effects of exercise have been done with men. The few studies that have included women have indicated that women may benefit even more than men from being physically fit. Early indications show that physically fit women enjoy even greater reduced rates of death from heart disease than men.

At Play

Play and recreation are important for good health. Look for opportunities such as these to be active and have fun at the same time:

- Plan family outings and vacations that include physical activity (hiking, backpacking, swimming, etc.)
- See the sights in new cities by walking, jogging or bicycling.
- Plan with a friend to enjoy your favorite physical activities, and do them.
- Play your favorite music while exercising, something that motivates you.
- Dance with someone or by yourself. Take dancing lessons. Hit the dance floor on fast numbers instead of slow ones.
- Join a recreational club that emphasizes physical activity.
- At the beach, sit and watch the waves instead of lying flat. Better yet, get up and walk, run or fly a kite.
- When golfing, walk instead of using a cart.
- Play singles tennis or racquetball instead of doubles.
- At a picnic, join in on badminton instead of croquet.
- At the lake, rent a rowboat instead of a canoe.

Physical Activity Calorie Use Chart

The chart below shows the approximate calories spent per hour by a 100-, 150- and 200- pound person doing a particular activity.

Activity	100#	150#	200#
Bicycling, 6 mph	160	240	312
Bicycling, 12 mph	270	410	534
Jogging, 7 mph	610	920	1230
Jumping rope	500	750	1000
Running 5.5 mph	440	660	962
Running 10 mph	850	1280	1664
Swimming, 25 yds/min	185	275	358
Swimming, 50 yds/min	325	500	650
Tennis singles	265	400	535
Walking, 2 mph	160	240	312
Walking, 3 mph	210	320	416
Walking, 4.5 mph	295	440	572

The Benefits of Daily Physical Activity

- Reduces the risk of heart disease by improving blood circulation throughout the body
- Keeps weight under control
- Improves blood cholesterol levels
- Prevents and manages high blood pressure
- Prevents bone loss
- Boosts energy level
- Helps manage stress

- Releases tension
- Improves the ability to fall asleep quickly and sleep well.
- Improves self-image
- Counters anxiety and depression, increases enthusiasm and optimism
- Increases muscle strength, increasing the ability to do other activities
- Provides a way to share an activity with family and friends
- Establishes good heart-healthy habits in children and counters the conditions (obesity, high blood pressure, poor cholesterol levels, poor lifestyle habits, etc.) that lead to heart attack and stroke later in life
- In older people, helps delay or prevent chronic illnesses and diseases associated with aging, maintains quality of life and independence longer

Tips for Exercise Success

Swimming, cycling, jogging, skiing, aerobic dancing, walking or any of dozens of other activities can help your heart. They all cause you to feel warm, perspire and breathe heavily without being out of breath and without feeling any burning sensation in your muscles. Whether it is a structured exercise program or just part of your daily routine, all exercise adds up to a healthier heart.

Here are some tips for exercise success:

- If you've been sedentary for a long time, are overweight, have a high risk of coronary heart disease or some other chronic health problem, see your doctor before beginning a physical activity program.
- Choose activities that are fun, not exhausting. Add variety. Develop a repertoire of several activities that you can enjoy. That way, exercise will never seem boring or routine.
- Wear comfortable properly fitted footwear and comfortable clothing.
- Find a convenient time and place to do activities. Try to make it a habit, but be flexible. If you miss an exercise opportunity, work activity into your day another way.
- Use music to keep you entertained. Surround yourself with supportive people. Decide what kind of support you need. Do you want them to remind you to exercise? Ask about your progress? Participate with you regularly or occasionally? Allow you time to exercise by yourself? Go with you to a special event, such as a 10K walk/run? Be understanding when you get up early to exercise? Spend time with the children while you exercise? Try not to ask you to change your exercise routine? Share your activity time with others. Make a date with a family member, friend or co-worker. Be an active role model for your children.
- Don't overdo it. Do low-to moderate-level activities, especially at first. You can slowly increase the duration and intensity of your activities as you become more fit. Over time, work up to exercising on most days of the week for 30-60 minutes.
- Keep a record of your activities. Reward yourself at special milestones. Nothing motivates like success!

Older Americans and Physical Activity

- In general, people become less physically active as they get older. Nearly 40 percent of people over the age of 55 report no leisure-time physical activity.
- The older people become, the more they need regular exercise. It helps prevent bone loss (reducing the risk of fractures) and reduces the risk of dozens of diseases associated with aging. It also increases the ability for basic living, making it easier to carry grocery bags, get up from a chair and take care of household chores. Being physically active is a real key in maintaining quality of life and independence.
- Studies have shown that increased levels of physical activity are associated with a reduced incidence of coronary heart disease, hypertension, non-insulin-dependent Type 2 diabetes, colon cancer, depression and anxiety.
- Active people with high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes or other chronic diseases are less likely to die prematurely than inactive people with these conditions.
- Inactive people lose muscle fiber at a rate of 3-5% every decade after age 30. That's a 15% loss of muscle fiber by age 60!
- Health experts say that with diminished exercise tolerance, an increasing number of elderly people will be living below, at, or just above "thresholds of physical ability." In this condition, a minor illness could make them completely dependent on others for daily care.

Exercise Tips for Older Americans

- If you have a family history of heart disease, check with your doctor first. It's a good idea to have an examination before starting a program.
- Pick rhythmic, repetitive activities that challenge the circulatory system, and exercise at an intensity appropriate for you.
- Pick activities that are fun, suit your needs and you can do year-round.
- Wear comfortable clothing and footwear appropriate for the temperature, humidity and activity.
- If you decide that walking is a great activity for you, choose a place that has a smooth, soft surface, that does not intersect with traffic, and that's well-lighted and safe. Many older Americans walk at area shopping malls.
- Find a companion to exercise with you if it will help you stay on a regular schedule and add to your enjoyment.
- Because muscular adaptation and elasticity generally slows with age, take more time to warm up and cool down while exercising. Make sure you stretch slowly.
- Start exercising at a low intensity (especially if you've been mostly sedentary), and progress gradually.
- Drink plenty of water-every 15 min.; as you age your sense of thirst tends to decrease and you can't completely rely on your internal sense of thirst.