



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS: KEEPING IT UP, STEPPING IT UP

A RESOURCE FOR VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES

If you are already exercising, you are on the right track. This fact sheet has tips on how to keep it up and step-up your goals. If you currently do not exercise, there are many good reasons to start. This fact sheet provides information on why exercise is so important for your life and health and offers tips to help you move forward.

ADDING MORE TIME

Exercise should include **2 hours and 30 minutes** a week, or 30 accumulated minutes per day, 5 days a week of aerobic physical activity. This can be achieved in one continuous session of physical activity, or in bouts of at least 10 minutes at a time throughout the day.

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 heart disease, type 2 diabetes, depression, arthritis, and some cancers.

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.

★ 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.”

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 walk briskly (4.5 mph) for 60 minutes 1 day. Then lift weights for 2 days.

You’ve mixed vigorous aerobic activity (biking fast) with moderate aerobic activity (walking briskly) and activities for stronger muscles (weights).

★ To mix it up, try some moderate and vigorous activities (check off the ones you will try):

MODERATE EXERCISE	VIGOROUS EXERCISE
<input type="checkbox"/> Hiking	<input type="checkbox"/> Jogging, Running
<input type="checkbox"/> Gardening or Yard Work	<input type="checkbox"/> Heavy Yard Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Dancing	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerobics
<input type="checkbox"/> Golfing (Carrying Clubs)	<input type="checkbox"/> Basketball
<input type="checkbox"/> Biking <10 mph	<input type="checkbox"/> Biking > 10 mph
<input type="checkbox"/> Walking 3.5 mph	<input type="checkbox"/> Walking 4.5 mph
	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming Laps
	<input type="checkbox"/> Weightlifting

▲Source: US Department of Health and Human Services: [health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/adults.aspx](https://www.health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/adults.aspx)





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.

▲Source: US Department of Health and Human Services: health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/adults.aspx

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES WE RECOMMEND FOR ALL VETERANS:

- **VHA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention**
MOVE: Weight management program for Veterans
www.move.va.gov
- **Center for Disease Control (CDC)**
How much physical activity do you need?
www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/index.htm
- **Mayo Clinic**
Exercise: 7 benefits of regular physical activity
www.mayoclinic.com/health/exercise/HQ01676

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:

- See a health care provider if you have a health problem.
- 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.

