

Regular Physical Activity is one of the most important ways to improve health

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things people can do to improve their health. Moving more and sitting less have tremendous benefits for everyone, regardless of age, sex, race, ethnicity, or current fitness level. The [second edition of the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#) provides evidence-based recommendations for adults and youth ages 3 through 17 to safely get the physical activity they need to stay healthy. There are new key guidelines for children ages 3 through 5 and updated guidelines for youth ages 6 through 17, adults, older adults, women during pregnancy and the postpartum period, adults with chronic health conditions, and adults with disabilities.

Below are some highlights from this new publication. The new key guidelines for children ages 3 through 5 state that preschool-aged children should be active throughout the day to enhance growth and development. Adults should encourage active play (light, moderate, or vigorous intensity) and aim for at least 3 hours per day.

1. **The recommended amount of physical activity for youth ages 6 through 17 is the same.** Youth ages 6 through 17 needs at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily. Activity can be aerobic, like walking, running, or anything that makes their hearts beat faster. They also need activities that make their muscles and bones strong, like climbing on playground equipment, playing basketball, and jumping rope.
2. **The recommended amount of physical activity for adults is the same.** Adults need at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, like brisk walking or fast dancing, each week. Adults also need muscle-strengthening activity, like lifting weights or doing push-ups, at least 2 days each week.
3. **Health benefits** from this publication is based on the latest scientific evidence that shows that physical activity has many health benefits independent of good nutrition.
4. The first key guideline for adults is to **move more and sit less**. This recommendation shows us there is a strong relationship between increased sedentary behavior and increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, and all-cause mortality. All physical activity can help offset these risks.
5. **All physical activity has some health benefits.** Small amounts of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity throughout the day in 10-minute intervals can add up and count toward meeting the guidelines. Keep moving all day is encouraged in these new guidelines.
6. New evidence shows that physical activity has **immediate health benefits**. For example, physical activity can reduce anxiety and blood pressure and improve quality of sleep and insulin sensitivity.
7. Meeting the recommendations in the *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* consistently over time can lead to even more long-term health benefits. (New benefits appear in bold with.) For youth, physical activity can help improve **cognition**, bone health, fitness, and heart health. It can also **reduce the risk of depression**. For adults, physical activity helps prevent 8 types of cancer including: **bladder**, breast, colon, **endometrium**, **esophagus**, **kidney**, **stomach**, and **lung**;

along with reducing the risk of **dementia** including **Alzheimer's disease**. Other benefits include reducing the risk for: all-cause mortality, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and depression; along with improving bone health, physical function, and quality of life. For older adults, physical activity also lowers the risk of falls and **injuries from falls**. For pregnant women, physical activity reduces the risk of **postpartum depression**. For all groups, physical activity reduces the risk of **excessive weight gain** and helps people maintain a healthy weight.

You can take small steps and fit physical activity into your lifestyle for all the above health benefits! New research shows that physical activity can help manage more health conditions that Americans already have. For example, physical activity can decrease pain for those with osteoarthritis, reduce disease progression for hypertension and type 2 diabetes, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and improve cognition for those with dementia, multiple sclerosis, ADHD, and Parkinson's disease. Make sure you follow these recommendations for a healthier lifestyle.