



# How Much Activity Do Older Adults Need?

According to the CDC (Center for Disease Control)

## Physical Activity is Essential to Healthy Aging

As an older adult, regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. It can prevent many of the health problems that seem to come with age. It also helps your muscles grow stronger so you can keep doing your day-to-day activities without becoming dependent on others.

Not doing any physical activity can be bad for you, no matter your age or health condition. Keep in mind, some physical activity is better than none at all. Your health benefits will also increase with the more physical activity that you do.

**If you're 65 years of age or older, are generally fit, and have no limiting health conditions** you can follow the guidelines listed below.

Physical activity is anything that gets your body moving. According to the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, you need to do two types of physical activity each week to improve your health—**aerobic** and **muscle-strengthening**.

**For Important Health Benefits Adults Need At Least:**

1. 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., brisk walking) every week **and**
  2. muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).
- OR
1. 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., jogging or running) every week **and**
  2. muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).
- OR
1. An equivalent mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity **and**
  2. muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest,

## AEROBIC ACTIVITY – WHAT COUNTS?

**Aerobic activity** or "cardio" gets you breathing harder and your heart beating faster. From pushing a lawn mower, to taking a dance class, to biking to the store – all types of activities count. As long as you're doing them at a moderate or vigorous intensity for **at least 10 minutes at a time**.

**Intensity** is how hard your body is working during aerobic activity.

### How do you know if you're doing light, moderate, or vigorous intensity aerobic activities?

For most people, light daily activities such as shopping, cooking, or doing the laundry doesn't count toward the guidelines. Why? Your body isn't working hard enough to get your heart rate up.

**Moderate-intensity aerobic activity** means you're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat. One way to tell is that you'll be able to talk, but not sing the words to your favorite song. Here are some examples of activities that require moderate effort:

- Walking fast
- Doing water aerobics
- Riding a bike on level ground or with few hills
- Playing doubles tennis
- Pushing a lawn mower

## MUSCLE-STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES – WHAT COUNTS?

Besides aerobic activity, you need to do things to strengthen your muscles at least 2 days a week. These activities should work all the major muscle groups of your body (legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms).

To gain health benefits, muscle-strengthening activities need to be done to the point where it's hard for you to do another repetition without help. A **repetition** is one complete movement of an activity, like lifting a weight or doing a sit-up. Try to do 8—12 repetitions per activity that count as 1 **set**. Try to do at least 1 set of muscle-strengthening activities, but to gain even more benefits, do 2 or 3 sets.

You can do activities that strengthen your muscles on the same or different days that you do aerobic activity, whatever works best. Just keep in mind that muscle-strengthening activities don't count toward your aerobic activity total.

There are many ways you can strengthen your muscles, whether it's at home or the gym. You may want to try the following:

- Lifting weights
- Working with resistance bands
- Doing exercises that use your body weight for resistance (i.e., push ups, sit ups)
- Heavy gardening (i.e., digging, shoveling)
- Yoga