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Taking Steps: Exercising to Promote Heart Health

INFORMATION FOR ADULTS



CARDI•OH
Ohio Cardiovascular Health Collaborative



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Everyone, regardless of their cardiovascular health, can gain benefits by improving their nutrition and healthy eating behaviors and by increasing physical activity.

Studies show that adults who follow national guidelines for a healthy diet and physical activity have fewer cardiovascular problems and lower death rates than those who do not.

Here are some simple recommendations to get you moving toward improving your cardiovascular health through physical activity. But first, make sure you speak with your health care provider before starting any exercise routine.

1

Engage in Weekly Aerobic Activity

Aerobic exercise consists of brisk activity that increases the circulation of oxygen in the blood and is associated with an increased rate of breathing. Aerobic exercise stimulates and strengthens the heart and lungs. For substantial health benefits of aerobic activity, perform either moderate-intensity or vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity on a weekly basis.



PERFORM

150 minutes

of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity a week.

or



PERFORM

75 minutes

of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity a week.

You can combine moderate and vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity, as well.

FOR EVEN GREATER HEALTH BENEFITS, TRY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

300 minutes

of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity a week.

or

150 minutes

of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity a week.

Moderate and Vigorous Activities

Vigorous activities take more effort than moderate ones. Here are a few examples of moderate and vigorous aerobic physical activities.

Be active *your way* by choosing activities you enjoy!



Moderate Activities: “I can talk while I do them, but I can’t sing.”

- » Biking on level ground or with few hills
- » General gardening (raking, trimming shrubs)
- » Sports where you catch and throw (baseball, softball, volleyball)
- » Tennis (doubles)
- » Using your manual wheelchair
- » Walking briskly

Vigorous Activities: “I can only say a few words without stopping to catch my breath.”

- » Aerobic dance
- » Biking faster than 10 miles per hour
- » Race walking, jogging, or running
- » Sports involving running (basketball, hockey, soccer)
- » Swimming laps

2 **Avoid Inactivity**

Some physical activity is better than none — and any amount has health benefits. Even if you cannot achieve the full recommended activity level right now, do what you can. Any physical activity will improve your heart health.

Move often during the day, even if you have only a few minutes free. Accumulate as much movement as you can and limit the time you spend sitting. Stairs are free exercise equipment!

3 **Strengthen Your Muscles**

There are many advantages to increasing muscle strength. By performing muscle strengthening activities, you protect your joints from injury, maintain flexibility and balance, help you keep a healthy body weight and lower the risk of osteoporosis (weak or brittle bones)

At a minimum, for two days a week, do muscle-strengthening activities (such as lifting weights or doing pushups) that are moderately to very challenging, and involve all major muscle groups, such as those that involve the upper body, lower body, and trunk.

For Older Adults

Older adults may be limited to the amount and type of exercise because of other health conditions they already have. While the exercise guidelines are the same throughout adulthood, you may need additional assistance. Talk to your health care provider about your health conditions and how they might affect your ability to do regular physical activity safely. If you cannot do 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week, you should be as physically active as your abilities and conditions allow. You should do exercises that maintain or improve balance.

This will decrease your risk for falling. These include side leg raises, back leg raises, and wall pushups. [Here is a site that describes ten exercises for improving your balance.](#)

Disability, Pregnancy, and Other Circumstances

Women who are pregnant, persons with disabilities, those with one or more chronic illnesses or potentially serious medical condition should talk with a health care provider for suggestions about how to become more physically active.

People of all ages can find many additional helpful exercise and physical activity suggests at the *Move Your Way* resource produced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

<https://health.gov/moveyourway/> or in the complete DHHS Physical Activity Guidelines for

Americans 2nd edition at

<https://health.gov/paguidelines/second-edition/>



Apps for Tracking Fitness

Note: These apps are examples of popular choices for tracking exercise and dietary intake and are presented as suggestions only. Cardi-OH does not endorse the use of any specific app or tracking system.

MyFitnessPal – Free online calorie counter and diet plan. Helps you lose weight by tracking your calories quickly and easily, and seeing where you should make adjustments. <https://www.myfitnesspal.com/>

Map My Fitness – Helps you track and map your workouts, such as walking, running, and biking, for pace, distance, and calories; also helps find nearby places to exercise. <https://www.mapmyfitness.com/>

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