How much exercise do I need?

Try to do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every week.

November 3, 2020 By Liz Highleyman

Exercise, along with a healthy diet and adequate sleep, is one of the keys to good overall health. Getting enough exercise can keep your bones and muscles strong, reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer, help you maintain a healthy weight and improve your cognitive function and mental health.

The aim is to move more and sit less throughout the day. Federal guidelines recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week—ideally spread out over multiple days—as well as muscle-strengthening activities. If you're just starting to exercise, build up to this level slowly by adding more minutes each day.

Examples of aerobic exercise include walking, running, bicycling and swimming—anything that gets your breathing and heart rate up. Strengthening exercises are those that work your muscles, such as lifting weights. Yoga and tai chi, which promote strength, balance and flexibility, can be good options, especially for people who are older or have physical limitations.

You don't need to go to a gym or buy fancy equipment to exercise. If you don't have access to a gym due to COVID-19, substitute activities outdoors or at home—many exercise classes have gone virtual. Everyday activities such as walking the dog, gardening and climbing stairs instead of taking the elevator contribute to your total weekly physical activity. Remember, any amount of physical activity is better than none!

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