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1300 36 27 87  
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## Key points to remember about being active every day

Being physically active is an important part of a healthy lifestyle.

Physical activity is good for you at any age.

Physical activity doesn't always have to be strenuous and you can include it in your daily routine.

Do at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking, on most, if not all, days of the week. You can do this in smaller bouts, such as three 10-minute walks, if it is easier.

The benefits start to happen as soon as you start doing physical activity.

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Healthy living

# Be active every day



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## What is physical activity?

Physical activity is any form of bodily movement performed by our large muscle groups – going for a walk, cycling around the neighbourhood and mowing the lawn. Jogging and aerobics are high-intensity types of physical activity.

## Why do I need to do physical activity?

At any age, physical activity provides a range of health benefits. And the good news is that it doesn't have to be strenuous – moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking, is great for your health.

Regular physical activity will:

- improve your long-term health
- reduce your risk of heart attack
- give you more energy
- help you to manage your weight
- help you to improve your cholesterol
- lower your blood pressure
- make your bones and muscles stronger
- make you feel more confident, happy and relaxed
- help you to sleep better.

If you have had a heart attack, regular physical activity will help you to recover more quickly. If you have diabetes, it will also help you to control your blood glucose levels.

### Remember

Being physically active is an important part of a healthy lifestyle.

## How much physical activity should I do?

We recommend that you do at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking, on most, if not all, days of the week. You can do this in smaller bouts, such as three 10-minute walks, if it is easier.

Some physical activity is better than none at all, and more is better than a little. Even if you have done no physical activity in the past, starting to do some can help to improve your health.

Moderate-intensity activities (energetic activities that don't make you breathless), such as brisk walking and cycling, are enough to give you health benefits.

## How can I be more physically active?

The easiest way to be more physically active is to make activity part of your day.

Even though our lives are very busy, there are lots of ways to fit physical activity into our daily routine. Think about how you can be active while doing something that has to be done anyway. Some of the following ideas may help to get you started.

### At home

- Get off the couch and change the TV channel instead of using the remote.
- Get off the couch or off the chair – the more you sit, the less active you will be.
- Walk into the next room to speak to a family member rather than shouting through walls.
- Watch one less TV program each week and do something active during that time instead. You could go for a walk, do some housework or gardening, or play games with your kids.

- If you have a garden, look after it yourself. Weeding, planting, digging and mowing the lawn will all help to burn off extra kilos – and can be fun at the same time.
- Housework, such as ironing, vacuuming, dusting, hand washing clothes and polishing furniture, may not seem like fun but will burn up energy.
- Walk your dog if you have one – or offer to walk your friend's or neighbour's dog if you don't.
- Clean out your cupboards, storage areas, garage or shed.
- Wash the windows of your home – inside and out.
- Walk to a letterbox to post letters instead of driving.
- Get a hands-free phone and walk around while using it.

### At work

- Walk over to speak to a colleague instead of phoning them or sending them an email.
- Take a break or use your lunch break to go for a walk – even 10 to 15 minutes is a good effort.
- If there are stairs, use them.
- If you sit at a desk all day, do some stretching exercises at least once a day.
- Stand up while you are on the phone, filing or even while you are working at your desk or having a meeting.
- Try to get away from your desk throughout the day.
- Do some filing.
- Organise lunchtime activities with colleagues, such as going for a walk, going to the gym or playing a sport.

### Going places

- Walk, ride your bike or rollerblade instead of driving. If you can't do it all the way, at least do it part of the way.

- Park your car further away from where you need to be and walk the extra distance.
- Get off the bus/tram/train one or two stops earlier and walk the extra distance.
- If you can walk somewhere instead of driving your car, do it. Think about whether or not you really need to drive. The less you drive your car, the better it is for you and for the environment.
- Walk your children to school.

## Socially

- Catch up with friends and family for a walk.
- Go on outings that encourage you to walk around, such as visiting the zoo, botanical gardens, fun parks, expos or historic sites.
- Visit your local park and take a picnic.
- Discover your local walking tracks.
- Meet up with friends to do active things, such as bowling, sailing, bike riding, tennis, rock climbing, dancing, swimming and bushwalking.
- Join a local community class, such as belly dancing, tai chi and yoga.



- Ask your local council about walking groups in your area – or call us on 1300 36 27 87 and find out about Heart Foundation Walking.
- Go hiking, rowing, bushwalking or camping on your next holiday.
- Try new activities, such as dancing, rock climbing, skipping, rollerblading, Frisbee and hula hoop.



- Form your own sports team with friends or colleagues, or join an existing club.
- Organise a picnic for friends and family and include games such as cricket, soccer or Frisbee.
- Enjoy social activities that include physical activity, such as going to street or park festivals and community walks or runs.

### Quick tip

A simple way to be more active every day is to spend less time sitting.

## How can I stay motivated?

Some people might find it hard to stay motivated to do physical activity. There are simple things that you can do to overcome this and make being physically active every day achievable.

### Tips to stay physically active

- Choose activities that you enjoy so that you are more likely to keep doing them.
- Vary the type of activity you do, so that you don't become bored by doing just one thing. This will increase your chance of staying active.
- Set yourself small, realistic goals for your activity. For example, "Tomorrow I'll walk 15 minutes to the train station instead of driving there".

- Buy a pedometer to measure how far you walk and set yourself targets to work towards. This will help to keep you motivated and will give you a sense of achievement.
- Set aside certain times of the day that suit you to be active – you're more likely to be committed if you schedule it into your routine.
- Be active with friends or your family so that you can motivate and encourage one another and have fun at the same time.
- Join a club or group and enjoy being physically active while socialising. The social support from being active with others may also improve your health.

## Am I too old to start doing physical activity?

No. Physical activity is good for you at any age. Even if you start to do regular moderate-intensity physical activity at middle age or older, you will still improve your health and wellbeing. The benefits start to happen as soon as you start doing physical activity.

## Is physical activity safe?

Over a lifetime it's more dangerous to be sedentary than to be active regularly. However, it is important to follow a few sensible steps to stay safe while you are doing physical activity.

Make sure that you wear clothes and shoes to suit the activity and weather. If you are outside in sunny weather, use sunscreen and wear a hat.

If you feel discomfort, have chest pain, feel faint, have trouble breathing or your heartbeat becomes too fast or irregular, stop the physical activity immediately and seek medical advice.

## Moderate-intensity physical activity

Most adults do not have to visit their doctor before starting to do regular moderate-intensity physical activity. However, if you have a chronic

health condition (such as coronary heart disease or diabetes), talk to your doctor about the types of activities that best suit your needs before you start a physical activity program.

## High-intensity physical activity

If you've been inactive and want to begin high-intensity physical activity, there are a few important tips to remember.

- Always start slowly and at a low level. If you want to be active at a high level, build up gradually over a few weeks.
- Don't overdo it. If you do, you could become exhausted, injure yourself and even lose interest.
- You can lose a lot of fluids through sweating when you are active (even more so in summer). Drink plenty of water before, during and after high-intensity physical activity.
- Avoid high-intensity physical activity straight after meals or alcohol, or if you have an illness, such as a cold.

## Remember

Talk to your doctor before you start a physical activity program if:

- you are a male over the age of 35 or a female over the age of 45
- physical activity causes pain in your chest
- you often faint or have spells of severe dizziness
- moderate-intensity physical activity makes you very breathless
- you are at a higher risk of coronary heart disease, for example, if you smoke, are overweight, have high cholesterol or high blood pressure
- you think you might have coronary heart disease or your doctor has said you have heart problems
- your heart beats too fast or irregularly
- you are pregnant.

## What else can I do to look after my heart?

Physical activity is just one important part of looking after your health and reducing your risk of heart problems. Other important things that you need to do are:

- be smoke-free
- enjoy healthy eating
- manage your blood pressure and cholesterol
- achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
- maintain your psychological and social health
- take any medicines as prescribed.



Want to speak with a health professional? call 1300 36 27 87



## National Physical Activity Guidelines for Adult Australians

Source: Department of Health and Ageing

The following guidelines have been developed to help you to make physical activity part of your day. The guidelines refer to the minimum levels of physical activity that you need to do for good health. They are not intended for high level fitness or sports training. Try to carry out all guidelines and for best results combine an active lifestyle with healthy eating.

1. Think of movement as an opportunity, not an inconvenience. Any form of body movement is an opportunity for improving health, not a time-wasting inconvenience.
2. Be active every day in as many ways as you can. Make a habit of walking or cycling instead of using the car, or do things yourself instead of using labour-saving machines.
3. Do at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, if not all, days. Moderate-intensity activity includes things such as a brisk walk or cycling. Combine short sessions of different activities of around 10 to 15 minutes each to a total of 30 minutes or more.
4. If you can, also enjoy regular high-intensity physical activity for extra health and fitness benefits. High-intensity physical activity makes you 'huff and puff'. For best results, high-intensity physical activity should be added to the 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity mentioned above, three to four days a week for 30 minutes or more each time.