

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: GETTING FIT FOR LIFE

Do you have reasons to not exercise or be more physically active? Well, put those reasons and fears behind you. Not exercising or being physically active causes your body more harm than good.

HEALTH NOTES



Here are some reasons why physical activity is good for older adults.

- Exercise and physical activity can help you feel better and enjoy life more. No one is too old or too out of shape to be more active.
- Regular exercise can prevent or slow-down some diseases like cancer, heart disease, or diabetes (high blood sugar). It can also perk up your mood and help depression, too.
- Being active can help you stay independent, so you can keep doing things like getting around or dressing yourself.

Four types of exercise

There are four types of exercises you need to do to have the right mixture of physical activity.

- 1. Aerobic exercise.** Engage in 150 minutes each week of physical activity that increases your heart rate. This equals 30 minutes on 5 days per week. You do not have to be active for 30 minutes all at once. You can start with ten minutes of physical activity such as walking, and build up to 30 minutes a day.
- 2. Strength training.** Do strength training activities twice a week to help maintain your muscle strength as you age.

Having enough muscle helps you to:

- get in or out of a chair by yourself,
- walk, and
- enjoy daily activities.

Keeping your muscles in shape can help prevent falls or balance problems. Falls can cause broken hips, and are a serious problem for older adults. When the leg and hip muscles that support you are strong, you are less likely to fall. Even if you do fall, you will be more likely to be able to get up on your own. And using your muscles may

For more information

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- Find tips on how to live healthier and longer.

Visit kp.org/health

- Click on Get health advice and read about fitness in the Health encyclopedia.

Visit kp.org/healthylifestyle

- Sign-up for a free, online personalized Healthy Lifestyles Program to help you manage your weight, quit smoking, manage stress, or improve your eating and physical activity habits.

make your bones stronger. You should keep your bones strong to avoid osteoporosis (brittle bones).

3. Balance. Balance is important for exercise and preventing falls. Try some of these activities:

- Stand on one foot, then the other. If possible, try this without using support.
- Stand up from sitting in a chair without using your hands or arms.
- Try walking heel to toe in a straight line.

4. Stretching and flexibility. Stretching can help keep you flexible and able to move more freely. Stretch when your muscles are warm. Never stretch so far that it hurts.

Who should exercise?

Almost anyone, at any age, can improve his or her health by doing some type of physical activity. Check with your doctor before you start any new physical activity or exercise plan if you:

- have an ongoing disease
- are overweight
- are a smoker
- have any new symptom you have not talked about with your doctor
- have problems such as chest pain or shortness of breath
- have joint swelling
- have pain or trouble walking after you have fallen
- have problems with balance
- have a hernia (when tissue swells and bulges through a weak spot in the wall of your stomach)
- have had surgery or an injury

Urine leakage

Urine leakage during exercise is a concern as you age. You can manage leakage by doing pelvic muscle strengthening (Kegel exercise). Lifestyle

changes or treatment may help if the problem continues. Talk with your doctor if you have problems with doing daily activities because of leakage.

Preventing falls

Accidental falls can have a major impact on the life of an older adult. You are more likely to fall and have weaker bones when you are not physically active at least 30 minutes a day on five days a week. Doing weight-bearing activities, such as walking, can help you improve your balance. Try small balance activities - see section on balance.

Safety tips

Here are some things you can do to make sure you are doing your activities safely:

- Start slow. Little by little, build up your level of physical activity. Doing too much too soon may cause you pain if you have not been active.
- Do not hold your breath when exercising. That could cause changes in your blood pressure. When weight lifting, breathe out when you lift; breathe in when you stop.
- Do not use your pulse rate as a way to tell how hard you should exercise. Some conditions and medicines can change your natural heart rate.
- Use a helmet for bike riding and the right shoes for walking or jogging.
- Be sure to drink plenty of water when you are doing activities that make you sweat, unless your doctor asks you to limit fluids.
- Learn the proper way to bend when you exercise. Ask a trainer for help.
- Warm up your muscles before you stretch. Do some light walking and light arm pumping first.

Physical activity should not hurt or make you feel really tired. You might feel some soreness, a little discomfort, or a bit weary, but you should not feel pain. If you feel pain when exercising, stop and talk to your doctor.

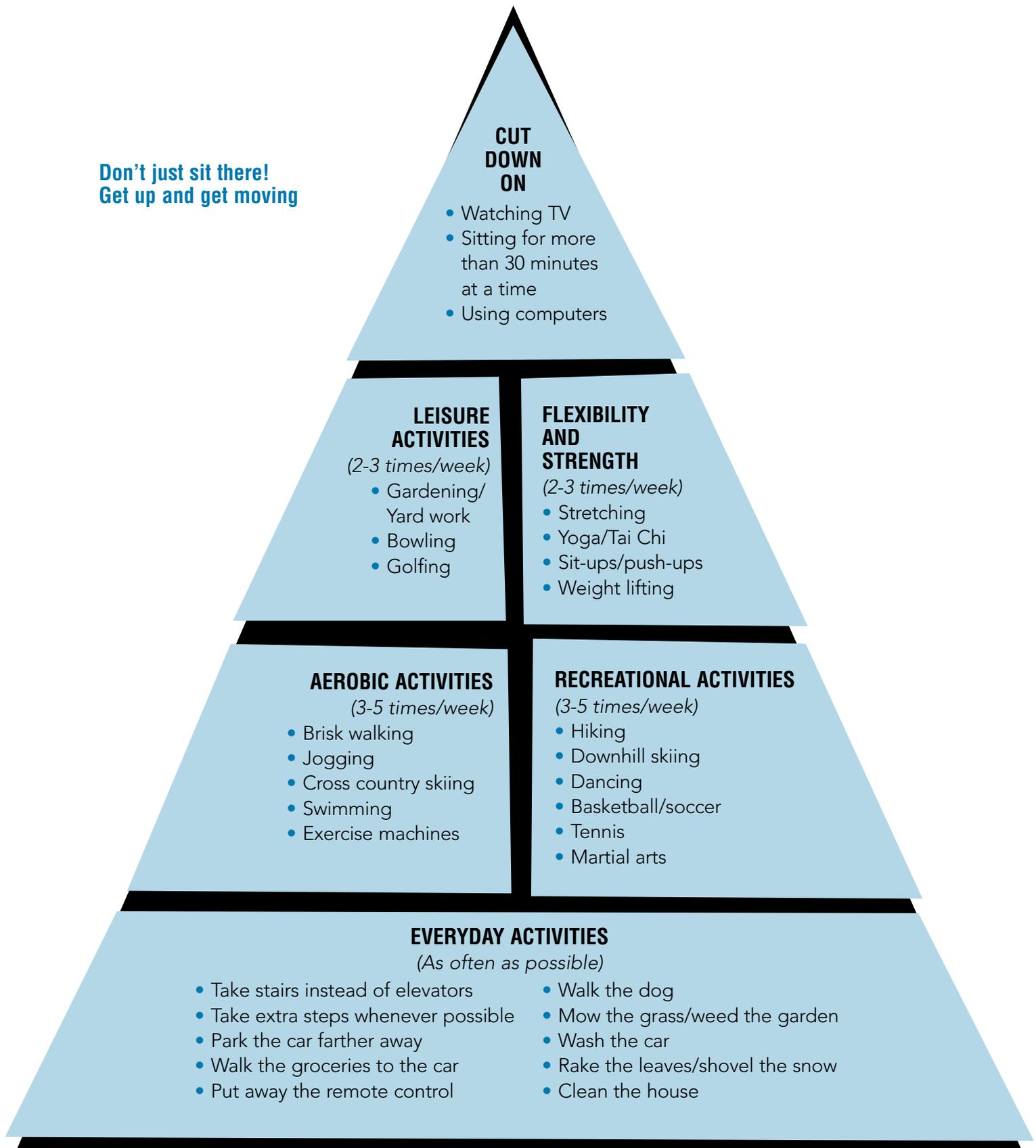
Your doctor can check off which level of physical activity is best for you based on your health status.

<input type="checkbox"/> Moderate–intense activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Vigorous-intense activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Muscle strengthening
<p>This level of activity will increase your heart rate and help move blood through your body. It includes weight-bearing activities such as walking, dancing, and swimming; promotes strong bones, flexibility, and balance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 2 hours and 30 minutes a week (30 minutes, 5 days a week) <input type="checkbox"/> 5 hours each week (1 hour, 5 days a week) 	<p>This level of activity creates large increases in heart rate. It includes activities such as running, kickboxing, and high impact aerobics. Your level of activity can determine what other activities are vigorous-intense. Vigorous-intense activity provides greater health benefits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 hour and 15 minutes a week (15 minutes, 5 days a week) <input type="checkbox"/> 2 hours and 30 minutes a week (30 minutes, 5 days a week) 	<p>Works all major muscle groups. This type of activity includes lifting weights, using resistance bands, and yoga; helps to prevent brittle bones. Heavier weights and low repetition may create bulky muscle. Lighter weights and high repetition may create lean muscle. Be sure to work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 2 or more days a week

Give a basic exercise Rx

Current activity level	Basic exercise Rx
Sedentary	<p>Go from doing nothing to doing something!</p> <p>Start with "everyday" activities and slowly work up to doing more.</p>
<p>Already active but not meeting current recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate aerobic activity 150 minutes/week, or 30 minutes/day, 5 days/week • Muscle building activity 2 days/week 	<p>Great work! For even more benefits add:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> _____ more day(s) of walking or aerobic activity <input type="checkbox"/> Strength training with elastic bands, dumbbells, or even cans of soup <input type="checkbox"/> Yoga/Tai Chi
Meeting recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Keep up the good work! Maintain what you are doing!

**Don't just sit there!
Get up and get moving**



The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent medical problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your doctor or member of your health care team. Adapted from the National Institute on Aging, U.S. D.H.H.S., Public Health Service, AgePage – Exercise: Feeling Fit for Life, May 2004.