

Physical activity - it's important

Summary

- Aim to do at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day.
 - See everyday activities as a good opportunity to be active.
 - Try to find the time for some regular, vigorous exercise for extra health and fitness benefits.
 - Minimise the amount of time spent in prolonged sitting and break up long periods of sitting as often as possible.
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Physical activity and health

Physical activity or exercise

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/keeping-active>)

can improve your health and reduce the risk of developing several diseases like **type 2 diabetes**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/diabetes-type-2>)

, **cancer**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/cancer-explained>)

and **cardiovascular disease**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/heart>)

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Physical activity and exercise can have immediate and long-term health benefits. Most importantly, regular activity can improve your quality of life.

A minimum of 30 minutes a day can allow you to enjoy these benefits.

Benefits of regular physical activity

If you are regularly physically active, you may:

- reduce your risk of a **heart attack**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/heart-attack>)

- **manage your weight**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/weight-management>)
better
- have a lower **blood cholesterol level**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/cholesterol>)
- lower the risk of **type 2 diabetes**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/diabetes-type-2>)
and some **cancers**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/cancer-explained>)
- have lower **blood pressure**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/blood-pressure>)
- have stronger **bones**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/bones>)
, **muscles**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/muscles>)
and joints and lower risk of developing **osteoporosis**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/osteoporosis>)
- lower your risk of **falls**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/falls-prevention-at-home>)
- recover better from periods of hospitalisation or bed rest
- feel better – with more energy, a better **mood**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/monitoring-your-mood>)
, feel more relaxed and **sleep**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/conditionsandtreatments/sleep>)
better.

A healthier state of mind

A number of studies have found that exercise helps **depression**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/conditionsandtreatments/depression>)

. There are many views as to how exercise helps people with depression:

- Exercise may block negative thoughts or distract you from daily worries.
- Exercising with others provides an opportunity for increased social contact.
- Increased fitness may lift your mood and improve your sleep patterns.
- Exercise may also change levels of chemicals in your brain, such as serotonin, endorphins and stress hormones.

Aim for at least 30 minutes a day

To maintain health and reduce your risk of health problems, health professionals and researchers recommend a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days.

Physical activity guidelines

Australia's physical activity and exercise guidelines

(<https://www.health.gov.au/topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/physical-activity-and-exercise-guidelines-for-all-australians>)

state that:

- Doing any physical activity is better than doing none. If you currently do no physical activity, start by doing some, and gradually build up to the recommended amount.
- Be active on most, preferably all, days every week.
- Accumulate 150 to 300 minutes (2 ½ to 5 hours) of moderate intensity physical activity or 75 to 150 minutes (1 ¼ to 2 ½ hours) of vigorous intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both moderate and vigorous activities, each week.
- Do muscle strengthening activities on at least 2 days each week.

Ways to increase physical activity

Increases in daily activity can come from small changes made throughout your day, such as **walking**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/walking-for-good-health>)

or **cycling**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/cycling-health-benefits>)

instead of using the car, getting off a tram, train or bus a stop earlier and walking the rest of the way, or walking the children to school.

See your doctor first

It is a good idea to see your doctor before starting your physical activity program if:

- you are aged over 45 years
- physical activity causes **pain in your chest**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/chest-pain>)
- you often **faint**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/fainting>)
or have spells of severe **dizziness**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/dizziness-and-vertigo>)
- moderate physical activity makes you very breathless
- you are at a higher risk of **heart disease**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/heart-disease-risk-factors>)
- you think you might have heart disease or you have heart problems
- you are **pregnant**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/pregnancy>)

Tips and ideas for older people (65 years and older)

Four types of activity are needed to keep you healthy:

- **moderate activity** – for your heart, lungs and blood vessels
- **strength activities** – to help maintain bone strength
- **flexibility activities** – to help you move more easily
- **balance activities** – to improve your balance and help prevent falls.

Pre-exercise screening is used to identify people with medical conditions that may put them at a higher risk of experiencing a health problem during physical activity. It is a filter or 'safety net' to help decide if the potential benefits of exercise outweigh the risks for you.

Print a copy of the **adult pre-exercise screening tool**

(https://bp-fitnessaustralia-production.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/uploaded_file/file/201/Australian-Adult-Pre-Exercise-Screening-Tool.pdf)

(PDF) and discuss it with your doctor, allied health or exercise professional.

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/serviceprofiles/general-practitioner-services>)
- Local gym
- Local community centre
- **AUSactive Find a Professional**
(<https://directory.ausactive.org.au/directory/professionals>)
Tel. 1300 211 311
- **Physiotherapist**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/serviceprofiles/physiotherapist-service>)
- **Podiatrist**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/serviceprofiles/podiatrist-service>)
- **Exercise physiologist**
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/serviceprofiles/Exercise-physiologist-services>)
- **Heart Foundation Walking**
(<http://walking.heartfoundation.org.au/>)

References

- Physical activity and exercise guidelines for all Australians
(<https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/physical-activity-and-exercise-guidelines-for-all-australians>)
, Department of Health and Aged Care, Australian Government.
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