



Overview: Physical Activity

Physical activity is movement of the body that uses energy. This is key to a healthy weight and an overall healthy lifestyle, along with a healthy diet. Experts recommend that in order to maintain a healthy weight, adults should do a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate physical activity (walking, jogging, mowing the lawn) most days of the week. More exercise is needed if weight loss is your goal.

Benefits of Physical Activity

Regular amounts of physical activity are not only needed to keep a healthy weight, but are also valuable for your overall health and well-being. Regular physical activity can:

- Improve self-esteem and reduce feelings of depression and anxiety
- Help build and maintain strong bones, muscles and joints
- Increase flexibility and posture
- Help control blood pressure and cholesterol
- Reduce your risk of stroke, type 2 diabetes and heart disease

TIP #1: Incorporate Physical Activity into Daily Activities

Being physically active does not mean you have to go to the gym, run a marathon or commit large amounts of time. Even small amounts of physical activity can be beneficial to your health. Here are a few ways that will help bring more physical activity into your day.

- Walk, bike, skate or jog to work, school or the store.
- Instead of taking the elevator or escalator, take the stairs.
- Park your car away from your destination and walk the extra distance.
- Get off the bus one or two stops earlier, and walk the rest of the way.
- Play with your children or take the dog for a walk.
- Take 10-minute fitness breaks at work to walk, stretch or climb up and down the stairs.

TIP #2: Start Out Slow

Start with small steps to increase your physical activity level. This way you will be more likely to stick with your new healthy habits over time.

- Begin by making a commitment to your health, not perfection.
- Choose a physical activity that you enjoy. This increases the chance that it will become a habit.
- Gradually build up the amount of time you spend doing the activity.

TIP #3: Have Fun

Physical Activity does not need to be difficult, boring or too challenging. Try different types of activities that interest you. Invite friends and family to make exercising a social event.

- Take your family hiking on local trails. You can find some trails at your local park or nature club (e.g. Sierra Club).
- Walk your dog.
- Put on some music and dance!
- Play sports with your kids.
- Join a neighborhood walking, cycling or other group.

Additional Information: Risks and Injuries

Although there are some risks and injuries that can be involved with physical activity, keep the following information in mind to help reduce your risk.

- Warm up and cool down before and after exercising.
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water.
- Listen to your body and be aware of signs of fatigue or injury.
- Consult your physician if you have a history of heart problems, stroke or other serious health conditions.

Sources

1. *Physical Activity for Everyone*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/everyone/>
2. *Inside the Pyramid: Physical Activity*. United States Department of Agriculture.
http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/physical_activity.html

For additional resources, please visit the L.A. County Department of Public Health website
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov>.