

Exercise

Fitness

Keeping fit is important for your health and wellbeing. Regular exercise can reduce the risk of many serious health conditions, including diabetes, heart disease and stroke, and can also help you keep at a



healthy weight. Exercise is also good for your mental health and for reducing stress. You should aim to do 150 minutes of exercise per week. This is the same as 30 minutes of exercise 5 times a week.

What Counts as Exercise?

Moderate-intensity aerobic activity means you're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and perspire. One way to tell if you're working at a moderate intensity is if you can still talk but you can't sing the words to a song.

Examples of moderate-intensity aerobic activities are:

- walking fast
- water aerobics
- riding a bike on level ground or with few hills
- playing doubles tennis

- pushing a lawn mower

Daily chores such as shopping, cooking or housework don't count towards your 150 minutes. This is because the effort needed to do them isn't hard enough to get your heart rate up.

Sedentary behaviour includes activities that involve spending time sitting or lying down. Excessive sedentary behaviour can be very bad for your health. Spending hours every day watching the TV, playing computer games or even sat at a desk can increase your risk of serious health conditions if you don't exercise regularly.

To stay healthy, adults aged 19-64 should try to be active daily and should do:

At least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity such as cycling or fast walking every week,

and

muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).

Or

75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity such as running or a game of singles tennis every week, **and**

muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).

Or

An equivalent mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity every week (for example 2 30-minute runs plus 30 minutes of fast walking),

and

muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).

What counts as moderate-intensity aerobic activity?

Examples of activities that require moderate effort for most people include:

- walking fast
- water aerobics
- riding a bike on level ground or with few hills
- doubles tennis
- pushing a lawn mower
- hiking
- skateboarding
- rollerblading
- volleyball

- basketball

What counts as vigorous-intensity aerobic activity?

Examples of activities that require vigorous effort for most people include:

- jogging or running
- swimming fast
- riding a bike fast or on hills
- singles tennis
- football
- rugby
- skipping rope
- hockey
- aerobics
- gymnastics
- martial arts

Vigorous-intensity aerobic activity means you're breathing hard and fast, and your heart rate has gone up quite a bit. If you're working at this level, you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.

In general, 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity can give similar health benefits to 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity.



What counts as muscle-strengthening activity?

Muscle-strengthening exercises are counted in repetitions and sets. A repetition is 1 complete movement of an activity, like lifting a weight or doing a sit-up. A set is a group of repetitions.

For each activity, try to do 8 to 12 repetitions in each set. Try to do at least 1 set of each muscle-strengthening activity. You'll get even more benefits if you do 2 or 3 sets.

To get health benefits from muscle-strengthening activities, you should do them to the point where you struggle to complete another repetition.

There are many ways you can strengthen your muscles, whether it's at home or in the gym. Examples of muscle-strengthening activities for most people include:

- lifting weights
- working with resistance bands
- doing exercises that use your body weight for resistance, such as push-ups and sit-ups
- heavy gardening, such as digging and shovelling
- yoga

You can do activities that strengthen your muscles on the same day or on different days as your aerobic activity, whatever's best for you.

However, muscle-strengthening activities don't count towards your aerobic activity total, so you'll need to do them in addition to your aerobic activity.

Some vigorous-intensity aerobic activities may provide 75 minutes of aerobic activity and sufficient muscle-strengthening activity. Examples include circuit training and sports such as football or rugby.

Warm up and cool down

It is important to stretch your muscles before starting exercise. This is known as 'warming up' and can help to prevent injury.

Stretching after exercise is known as 'cooling down' and can help to improve your flexibility as well as aiding relaxation.