

2008 Physical Activity Guidelines

We all know exercise is good for our bodies, our health, and our emotional well being. Our government (Dept. of Health & Human Services), along with several others (American College of Sports Medicine, CDC, National Institutes of Health, Surgeon General) develop guidelines for us so we can know how much and how often we should exercise. The main purpose behind the guidelines is that regular exercise over months and years produces long-term health benefits. The current guidelines are much more specific than those written in earlier years (first published in 1970 by the American Heart Association). Before I summarize the guidelines, consider this question - "Is there is a difference between "activity" and "exercise"? The answer is "yes"!! Although activities like cleaning house or running errands keep us active, they do not replace the benefits of exercise. Don't confuse your daily living movements with exercise. Here are just a few of the benefits exercise offers us:

- Improved body composition (more muscle, less body fat)
- Improved bone density
- Increased stamina & energy
- Reduces the risk of heart disease and some cancers
- Enhanced resistance to infectious disease
- Reduces the risk of Type II diabetes
- Stronger self-image
- Lower incidence of depression
- Restful sleep

In addition, guidelines for health and guidelines for weight loss are different in some respects. I am sure most of you have heard the "30-minutes a day" of some type of cardiovascular activity (walking briskly, running, cycling, elliptical trainer) as a good rule of thumb. This is true. However, if you are trying to lose weight, the recommendation is at least 60 minutes of cardio 5 days a week (300+ minutes). Don't panic!! Most people cannot or are not willing to put in that kind of time on doing just cardio. Can you lose weight on less? Yes, but it will quite a bit longer and your diet has to be addressed as well. This is not a "weight loss" segment, but wanted to offer a little information. Now for the most recent guidelines:

1. For health benefits, adults (ages 18-64) should do at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity each week. (I will define

“moderate” & “vigorous” soon). Remember, major research findings state that some physical activity is better than none.

2. Aerobic exercise should be performed in segments of at least 10 minutes.
3. For greater benefits, adults should increase their aerobic exercise to 300 minutes per week; higher intensity also provides greater health benefits.
4. Muscle-strengthening activities should be performed 2 days per week, using all major muscle groups.
5. Moderate-intensity (3.0-5.9 METs) is defined as walking at 3.0 miles per hour (which is 3.3 METS). METS are just a way to measure intensity; many cardio machines list METS. Other moderate-intensity activities include water aerobics, ballroom dancing, tennis (doubles), and general gardening.
6. Vigorous-intensity (6.0 METs or more) is defined as jogging 6.0 miles per hour – a 10 minute mile. Other vigorous-intensity activities include swimming laps, aerobic classes, jumping rope, hiking uphill or with a heavy backpack.

These are the basic guidelines for adults. There are additional specific guidelines for children, adolescents, older adults (65+), pregnancy, and persons with disabilities. The benefits of regular exercise far outweigh potential problems (injury). Seek professional guidance to lower your risk of injury. For the complete guidelines go to:

www.health.gov/Paguidelines/default.aspx. You could also just Google “2008 Physical Activity Guidelines”. About 66% of Americans do not exercise at all. Please make the decision to be one of the healthy 34%!!