

Physical Activity Guidelines

The National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australians outline the minimum levels of physical activity required to gain a health benefit and ways to incorporate incidental physical activity into everyday life.

- [Physical Activity](#)
 - [Research and Statistics](#)
 - **[Physical Activity Guidelines](#)**
 - [Resources](#)
 - [Links](#)
 - [Choose Health: Be Active: A physical activity guide for older Australians](#)
 - [National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 Years](#)
 - [National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 Years](#)
 - [National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 Years: Tips and Ideas](#)
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- [Great Reasons to be Active](#)
 - [Physical Activity Recommendations for 0-5 year olds](#)
 - [Physical Activity Recommendations for 5-12 year olds](#)
 - [Physical Activity Recommendations for 12-18 year olds](#)
 - [Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults](#)
 - [Physical Activity Recommendations for Older Australians](#)

Great Reasons to be Active

Being active is good for you in so many ways. It can provide a huge range of fun experiences, make you feel good, improve your health, and is a great way to relax and enjoy the company of your friends.

Regular physical activity can:

- help prevent heart disease, stroke and high blood pressure;
- reduce the risk of developing type II diabetes and some cancers;
- help build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints reducing the risk of injury; and
- promote psychological well-being.

Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 years

Being physically active every day is important for the healthy growth and development of infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

For infants (birth to one year) physical activity – particularly supervised floor-based play in safe environments – should be encouraged from birth.

Before infants begin to crawl, encourage them to be physically active by reaching and grasping, pulling and pushing, moving their head, body and limbs during daily routines, and during supervised floor play, including tummy time. Once infants are mobile, encourage them to be as active as possible in a safe, supervised and nurturing play environment.

- *Toddlers (1 to 3 years) & Pre-schoolers (3 to 5 years)* should be physically active every day for at least three hours, spread throughout the day.

Young children don't need to do their three hours of physical activity all at once. It can be accumulated throughout the day and can include light activity like standing up, moving around and playing as well as more vigorous activity like running and jumping. Active play is the best way for young children to be physically active.

- *Children younger than 2 years of age* should not spend any time watching television or using other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games) and for children *2 to 5 years of age* these activities should be limited to less than one hour per day.

Television, DVDs and playing computer games usually involve sitting for long periods – time which could be spent playing active games or interacting with others.

- *Infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers* should not be sedentary, restrained, or kept inactive, for more than one hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping.

All children need some 'down time' but they are not naturally inactive for long periods of time. Sitting in strollers, highchairs and car seats (restrained) for long periods isn't good for children's health and development. Try to take regular breaks on long car trips and walk or pedal for short trips when you can.

While meeting these recommendations may seem like a challenge at times, a brochure that includes tips and ideas to help you include more activity in your child's day and further information on the recommendations can be found at [National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 years](#).

Physical Activity Recommendations for 5-12 year olds

A combination of moderate and vigorous activities for at least 60 minutes a day is recommended.

Examples of moderate activities are a brisk walk, a bike ride or any sort of active play.

More vigorous activities will make kids "huff and puff" and include organised sports such as football and netball, as well as activities such as ballet, running and swimming laps. Children typically accumulate activity in intermittent bursts ranging from a few seconds to several minutes, so any sort of active play will usually include some vigorous activity.

Most importantly, kids need the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities that are fun and suit their interests, skills and abilities. Variety will also offer your child a range of health benefits, experiences and challenges.

Children shouldn't spend more than two hours a day using electronic media for entertainment (eg computer games, TV, internet), particularly during daylight hours.

Further information is available on [Australia's Physical Activity Recommendations for 5-12 year olds](#)

Physical Activity Recommendations for 12-18 year olds

At least 60 minutes of physical activity every day is recommended. This can be built up throughout the day with a variety of activities.

Physical activity should be done at moderate to vigorous intensity. There are heaps of fun ways to do it:

- Moderate activities like brisk walking, bike riding with friends, skateboarding and dancing.
- Vigorous activities such as football, netball, soccer, running, swimming laps or training for sport.
- Vigorous activities are those that make you “huff and puff”. For additional health benefits, try to include 20 minutes or more of vigorous activity at least three to four days a week.

Try to be active in as many ways as possible. Variety is important in providing a range of fun experiences and challenges and provides an opportunity to learn new skills.

Make the most of each activity in your day. For example, you can walk the dog and replace short car trips with a walk or bike ride.

Further information is available on [Australia's Physical Activity Recommendations for 12-18 year olds](#)

Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults

There are four steps for better health for Australian adults.

Together, steps 1-3 recommend the minimum amount of physical activity you need to do to enhance your health. They are not intended for high-level fitness, sports training or weight loss. To achieve best results, try to carry out all three steps and combine an active lifestyle with healthy eating.

Step 4 is for those who are able, and wish, to achieve greater health and fitness benefits.

Step 1 – Think of movement as an opportunity, not an inconvenience

Where any form of movement of the body is seen as an opportunity for improving health, not as a time-wasting inconvenience.

Step 2- Be active every day in as many ways as you can

Make a habit of walking or cycling instead of using the car, or do things yourself instead of using labour-saving machines.

Step 3 – Put together at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days.

You can accumulate your 30 minutes (or more) throughout the day by combining a few shorter sessions of activity of around 10 to 15 minutes each.

Step 4 – If you can, also enjoy some regular, vigorous activity for extra health and fitness

This step does not replace Steps 1-3. Rather it adds an extra level for those who are able, and wish, to achieve greater health and fitness benefits.

Further information is available on [National Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults](#)

Physical Activity Recommendations for Older Australians

It's never too late to start becoming physically active, and to feel the associated benefits. "Too old" or "too frail" are not of themselves reasons for an older person not to undertake physical activity. Most physical activities can be adjusted to accommodate older people with a range of abilities and health problems, including those living in residential care facilities.

Many improved health and well-being outcomes have been shown to occur with regular physical activity. These include helping to:

- maintain or improve physical function and independent living;
- improve social interactions, quality of life, and reduce depression;
- build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints, reducing the risk of injuries from falls; and
- reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type II diabetes, and some cancers.

There are five physical activity recommendations for older Australians.

1. Older people should do some form of physical activity, no matter what their age, weight, health problems or abilities.
2. Older people should be active every day in as many ways as possible, doing a range of physical activities that incorporate fitness, strength, balance and flexibility.
3. Older people should accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days.
4. Older people who have stopped physical activity, or who are starting a new physical activity, should start at a level that is easily manageable and gradually build up the recommended amount, type and frequency of activity.
5. Older people who continue to enjoy a lifetime of vigorous physical activity should carry on doing so in a manner suited to their capability into later life, provided recommended safety procedures and guidelines are adhered to.