

How Much Exercise is Enough Exercise ?

A recent study suggested that just over half of all men, and nearly three quarters of all women now think that walking a few times a week is enough exercise to prevent health problems. Sadly this probably isn't enough for most of us - brisk walking offers *some* health benefits but vigorous activities like jogging or running are best.

The following guidelines to help **maintain** health, and reduce the risk for chronic disease have been produced for Healthy adults under age 65 (www.acsm.org) Work hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat, yet still be able to carry on a conversation. This is moderately intense cardio, and you should aim for 30 minutes a day, five days a week

Or

Work hard enough so that you're breathing hard and fast, and your heart rate is increased substantially. This is vigorously intense cardio, and you should aim for 20 minutes a day, 3 days a week

This might not seem like much, but with work, family commitments, and other responsibilities, it's often difficult to meet the recommendations. These suggestions might help:

- **Do it in short sessions:** Accumulate the total in periods of at least 10 minutes at a time throughout the day.
- **Mix it up:** If it's possible, try and combine moderate and vigorous activity: walk hard for 30 minutes twice each week and jog on two other days.
- **Try and keep it regular:** Try and set aside specific days and times for exercise, making it a regular part of your routine.
- **A gym isn't essential:** You don't need a gym membership - a good pair of trainers and some motivation are enough.
- **Get some support:** Taking family or friends with you helps often makes it easier. It's a good way to encourage everyone to be physically active.

Choose activities you enjoy: if you need variety of activities to stay motivated, combine a few that appeal to you.

It's really important to try and drink enough at any time, but especially during exercise – if you're sweating then you're losing water. Try to drink roughly 200ml every 10 minutes while exercising, and remember it's important to drink whether or not you feel thirsty.

Finally, and very importantly: if you haven't exercised for a while, or have any medical conditions which might cause problems, check with your Doctor to ensure it's safe to increase your activity levels. Remember, pain is a sign that something is wrong....

Next month we'll have a look at suggestions for strength training, and exercise for older adults.

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