

Exercise Guidelines for Adults

Any movement is better than no movement!

Start on a physical activity that you will want to do tomorrow!

Start low, go slow!

Cardiorespiratory Exercise

Type

- Walk, hike, bike, swim, jog/run, dance, elliptical, stairs, jump rope, tennis, kickboxing.

Time

- Aim for at least 25 minutes per session.
- One continuous session and multiple shorter sessions (of at least 10 minutes) are both acceptable to accumulate desired amount of daily exercise.

Intensity

- Moderate to vigorous intensity.

Frequency

- Aim for at least 3 times per week.
- Adults should get at least 150 moderate-intensity exercise per week.
- For weight loss and if tolerable, aim for 300 minutes per week.

Exercise Guidelines for Adults

☐ Resistance Exercise

Type

- Free weights – classic strength training tools such as dumbbells, barbells and kettlebells medicine balls or sand bags.
- Weight machines – devices that have adjustable seats with handles attached either to weights or hydraulics.
- Resistance bands – like giant rubber bands – these provide resistance when stretched. They are portable and can be adapted to most workouts. The bands provide continuous resistance throughout a movement.
- Suspension equipment – a training tool that uses gravity and the user’s body weight to complete various exercises.
- Your own body weight – can be used for squats, push-ups and chin-ups. Using your own body weight is convenient, especially when travelling or at work.

Time

- Perform 8-10 multi-joint exercises that stress the major muscle groups.
- Perform 2-3 sets of 8-12 repetitions with good form.
- Lift and lower the weight in a controlled manner (2 seconds each up and down).

Intensity

- The last repetition should be difficult to complete.
- Progress weight lifted over time so that it feels like an 8 out of 10 difficulty (where 0 = no effort, 10 = hardest effort you can give).

Frequency

- Perform exercise 2-3 times per week or wait 48 hours between sessions of same muscle group.

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☐ Flexibility Exercise

Type

- Static, dynamic, ballistic and PNF stretches are all effective.
- Types of Stretching: <https://www.acefitness.org/fitness-certifications/ace-answers/exam-preparation-blog/2966/types-of-stretching/>

Time

- Each stretch should be held for 10-30 seconds to the point of tightness or slight discomfort.
- Repeat each stretch two to four times, accumulating 60 seconds per stretch.

Intensity

- Flexibility exercise is most effective when the muscle is warm. Try light aerobic activity or a hot bath to warm the muscles before stretching.

Frequency

- Adults should do flexibility exercises at least two or three days each week to improve range of motion.

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Neuromotor Exercise (“Functional Fitness Training”)

Type

- Yoga, tai chi, dance.
- Exercises should involve motor skills (balance, agility, coordination and gait), proprioceptive exercise training and multifaceted activities to improve physical function and prevent falls in older adults.

Time

- 20-30 minutes per session is appropriate for neuromotor exercise.

Intensity

- Flexibility exercise is most effective when the muscle is warm. Try light aerobic activity or a hot bath to warm the muscles before stretching.

Frequency

- Neuromotor exercise is recommended for two or three days per week.

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Exercise Intensity

Moderate exercise intensity: Moderate activity feels somewhat hard. Here are clues that your exercise intensity is at a moderate level:

- Your breathing quickens, but you're not out of breath.
- You develop a light sweat after about 10 minutes of activity.
- You can carry on a conversation, but you can't sing.

Vigorous exercise intensity: Vigorous activity feels challenging. Here are clues that your exercise intensity is at a vigorous level:

- Your breathing is deep and rapid.
- You develop a sweat after only a few minutes of activity.
- You can't say more than a few words without pausing for breath.

Overexerting yourself: Beware of pushing yourself too hard too often. If you are short of breath, are in pain or can't work out as long as you'd planned, your exercise intensity is probably higher than your fitness level allows. Back off a bit and build intensity gradually.

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☐ Aerobic Exercise Cautions

- If you have been inactive for a long time, start with short sessions (10 to 15 minutes). Add five minutes to each session, increasing every two to four weeks. Gradually build up to being active 30 minutes a day for most days of the week.
- If you take a beta-blocker or any other medication that affects your heart rate, exercise at an intensity that you feel is “somewhat hard.”
- Always cool down slowly. Some blood pressure medications may reduce your blood pressure too much if you stop exercising too quickly. These include alpha-blockers, calcium-channel blockers, and vasodilators.
- Be sure to drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after exercise, especially if you plan to exercise on a hot day or for a long time. Beta-blockers and diuretics may affect your body’s ability to regulate its temperature in hot, humid conditions.
- If possible, measure your blood pressure before you exercise. Do not exercise if your resting systolic blood pressure (the top number) is greater than 200 or your diastolic blood pressure (the bottom number) is greater than 115. Contact your doctor to see if you need to modify your medication.

☐ Resistance Exercise Cautions

- Do not continue to lift a weight when you feel exhausted. The intensity of the last few repetitions will be close to your maximum. Also, the rise in your blood pressure may be too great.
- Avoid holding your breath when lifting. This can cause large changes in blood pressure. That change may increase the risk of passing out or developing abnormal heart rhythms.

Reference:

1. Riebe, D., Ehrman, J., Liguori, G., and Magal, M. (Eds.). (2018). *American College of Sports Medicine: Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription (10th ed.)*. Wolters Kluwer.