



Physical Activity Fact Sheet

How much physical activity is recommended?

In order to achieve health benefits, adults aged 18-64 years should aim for the following:

- Get at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.¹
 - **Moderate intensity physical activity:** Causes adults to sweat a little and breathe hard and includes activities such as brisk walking and bike riding.²
 - **Vigorous intensity physical activity:** Causes adults to sweat and be “out of breath” and includes activities such as jogging and cross-country skiing.²
- Add muscle- and bone-strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least 2 days/week.¹
 - Examples: skipping, jumping and lightweight-resistance training.²

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines are evidence-based and provide the minimum measured goals to achieve overall health benefits, thus, more physical activity provides greater health benefits.^{1,2}

Benefits of physical activity

Regular physical activity helps improve³:

- Overall health, fitness and energy levels
- Self esteem
- The ability to deal with stress
- Muscle and bone strength
- The likelihood of living independently later in life

Regular physical activity has also been shown to reduce the risk of over 25 chronic conditions, including coronary heart disease, hypertension, breast cancer, colon cancer, Type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis.³

Fast Facts on the Benefits of Physical Activity

- Physical activity helps to keep joints healthy.⁴



- Long-term physical activity can lead to long-term happiness.⁵
- Exercise is the single best thing for peripheral artery disease, because it helps make new blood vessels.⁶
- Some exercise is better than no exercise.⁷
- Aerobic exercise results in increased hippocampal volume in healthy community dwelling older adults.⁸ That means exercise is good for your brain!
- Doing resistance training (like lifting weights) two times a week improves memory.⁹
- A physically active lifestyle among the population will substantially reduce the burden, or social, physical and economic cost, of disease, death, and disability in Ontario.^{10,11}

Sedentary behaviour

Sedentary behavior is not necessarily the same as physical inactivity. That's because sedentary behaviors refer to those that don't require much energy expenditure, like sitting, watching TV, or driving a car. Physical inactivity means lack of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. So it is possible to achieve the recommended levels of physical activity but still spend a significant proportion of time being sedentary.^{12,13} This is important to be aware of because sedentary behavior has consequences on health independent of physical inactivity; it is associated with elevated risks of mortality from all causes.¹⁴

In a recent study looking at sitting time of almost 50,000 adults (aged 18-65 years) from 20 countries worldwide, Canada posted the following stats¹³:

- Median sitting time of 300 minutes/day as compared to the highest countries at greater than 360 min/day.
- 54% of Canadians reported sitting 4 hours or more per day.

Therefore, it is important to break up sitting time with small bouts of physical activity. The following are tips for sitting less¹⁵:

At work

- Stand up while talking on the phone and set a reminder to stand up every hour
- Host active meetings - encourage people to stand up during long meetings and have frequent stretch/movement breaks or have walking meetings
- Walk to a colleague's desk instead of instant messaging or emailing
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator



While commuting

- Park in a spot farther away from the entrance or on a higher level of the parking garage
- Get off the bus 1-2 stops earlier and stand on the bus/subway/train
- Ride your bike or walk to the train station or to school/work

When hanging out

- Limit screen time to 2 hours or less a day and stand up several times throughout - do squats!
- If sitting for a long time, move your legs and feet, circle your hands and shoulders, flex your muscles
- Eat a portion of your meal standing up





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