



How Much Exercise do you really need?

For years we've been told that everybody should spend at least 30 minutes a day in physical activity; but, recently the Health Canada doubled that recommendation to an hour every day of moderately intense activity, such as brisk walking. Which advice is right? Where do you fit in? What benefit will you get from it, anyway? What counts as physical activity?

Here's how to sort out what's right for you.

- ⇒ To stay healthy, people who *don't need to lose weight* should get at least *30 minutes* of moderately intense physical activity everyday, or nearly every day. Preferably, it should be an aerobic activity (good for the cardiovascular system), like brisk walking, running, cycling, swimming. Vigorous work like raking and bagging leaves or washing floors also counts.
- ⇒ If you *need to lose weight*, extend your routine to at least *an hour* a day, six to seven days a week. Do something that raises your heart rate and makes you breathe faster and sweat.
- ⇒ You don't need to pack all your exercise into one session. Short bouts of exercise during the day add up. Three 10 or 20 minute sessions daily will do as much good as one longer session and may fit your schedule better.
- ⇒ Walking is the most practical, accessible exercise and the safest. But casual strolling is not enough. Aim for a brisk pace, about 5.5 - 6.5 kms per hour (so you walk about 1.5kms in 15 minutes). If you are just starting a walking program, check your pace by walking on a treadmill or timing yourself as you walk a measured kilometre. If you've been inactive, it may take a few weeks to get used to walking briskly.
- ⇒ Look on physical activity as an opportunity. Make it a habit - walk whenever possible, instead of driving or taking the bus. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Ride your bike to work. Go for a walk at lunch time. Plan to increase your workout time and intensity as the weeks go by.
- ⇒ If you are very overweight, have always been inactive, or are over 70, you may find it hard to get going. A walking pace of 5.5 - 6.5 kms per hour may seem impossible to achieve. But keep trying. Do what you can do. It's never too late to start exercising and to get the benefits.
- ⇒ As you get used to a routine, add some strength training with free weights or machines. This is especially important for bone health as you grow older. If you have never done any strength training, a few lessons with a Personal Trainer can be a great investment to get you started.
- ⇒ If you are looking to boost your heart-protective HDL cholesterol, you'll need to do longer and more intense aerobic workouts, like brisk walking, cycling, swimming or running. Over-weight people who lose weight with exercise are likely to see the biggest increase in HDL and the most lasting weight loss.

Exercise can add years to your life and life to your years!

Working with you for lasting change, Lynda Pedley

Adapted from Consumer Reports on Health

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