

Physical Activity Fact sheet

Physical activity helps improve your health and reduce your risk of stroke. Regular physical activity also helps you maintain a healthy weight, feel better, and sleep better.

What is physical activity?

Being physically active is as simple as gardening, walking, or house cleaning.

The Department of Health and Human Services recommends:

- At least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity, 75 minutes a week of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination of both.
- Strength training, which can help increase muscle mass or maintain it.
- Breaking up exercise into small chunks of time. Aim for 150 minutes a week.

What are the benefits of physical activity?

Regular physical exercise helps you:

- Lose or control your weight
- Reduce your risk for many diseases and cancers
- Strengthen your bones and muscles
- Improve your mental health and mood
- Improve your everyday functioning and prevent falls
- Live longer

What are ways to be physically active?

Many people start exercise programs at a health club, gym, or recreation center where they can get access to equipment and support.



There are many things you can do every day at home to increase your activity. For example, you can:

- √ Do yard work.
- √ Go for a short walk.
- √ Stand and pace while talking on the phone.
- √ Do stretches, sit-ups, and push-ups while watching TV
- √ Dance to music as you're cleaning the house

All these activities use energy to get your body moving and improve your health.

What is the best way to get started?



First check with your healthcare provider to make sure you are cleared for exercise. Your doctor can help you determine your fitness goals and create a plan for you. From there, our “Getting Started Checklist” and

these tips can help make regular physical activity a part of your life.

Start slowly. Many people try to do too much too soon, and get injured or disillusioned. Instead, do 10- to 15-minute chunks of activity, several times a day.

Make exercise part of your lifestyle. Schedule workouts on your calendar, have walking shoes on hand, and keep your gym bag in your car. You can also do everyday activities like parking far from an entrance and taking the stairs.

Reward yourself. It's important to reward yourself when you reach a goal, such as losing a pound. The reward should be something not food related.

Pass the time. Listening to music or books on tape or watching television while you exercise can often help keep you focused and motivated.

Remember to strength train. Aim to add two to three strength training sessions a week to your workout. Building muscle can help develop strong bones, burn calories, improve balance, and reduce the signs and symptoms of many chronic



conditions. You can strength train by lifting weights, using weight machines, or doing pushups etc.

Workout with others. Meeting a friend for a walk or joining a fitness class increases your accountability to ensure that you show up to exercise. And it is more fun too.

Count your steps. Investing in a fitness tracking device can help you monitor your daily activity. Start off with a goal to

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walk 5,000 steps a day and gradually increase your distance.

For more information about ways to reduce your risk of stroke, visit www.stroke.org.

Note: This fact sheet is compiled from general, publicly available information and should not be considered recommended treatment for any particular individual. You should consult your provider about any personal medical concerns.

All publications are reviewed by National Stroke Association's Publications Committee.

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