



Why Should I Exercise?

Allison Armstrong, M.S., R.D.N.
 Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D.
 Sherri Nordstrom Stastny, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D., C.S.S.D.

Regular physical activity, especially aerobic activity, is one of the most important ways to improve your health. Any activity that increases your heart rate and breathing is considered aerobic exercise. The word “aerobic” means “with oxygen.” This type of exercise helps your heart, lungs and circulatory system stay healthy throughout the life cycle. Regular aerobic activity has many benefits including:

- A lowered risk of heart disease and some cancers
- Strengthening of bones and muscles
- Lowered incidence of anxiety and depression
- Increased quality of life
- Lowered blood pressure
- Increased weight management
- A lower risk of falls or injury from a fall
- Decreased inflammation

As you aim for regular physical activity, consider these three principles: intensity, duration and frequency. Intensity is the amount of overall effort required to perform the activity. Moderate intensity can be described as an increased heart rate and breathing, with the ability to still comfortably talk and continue the exercise for an extended time. On the other hand, vigorous intensity requires more effort and heavier breathing. It is much more difficult to talk and sustain over time. Duration is the length of time spent performing an activity. Frequency is the number of sessions spent performing aerobic activity.

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

- 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise **OR** 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise per week
- Many individuals find it easiest to exercise for 30 minutes or longer five days each week

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Which Exercises Count?

At the local gym

If you live close enough to a gym, there are quite a few options that are great for aerobic exercise. Whether you choose to join one of the exercise classes or you would rather exercise on your own, the gym can provide variety in your physical activity routine.

- Treadmill
- Stairmaster
- Stationary bicycle
- Elliptical
- Water aerobics
- Swimming
- Rowing
- Zumba
- Some types of yoga

At your home or community

For those who prefer to stay closer to home or meet up with friends, there are plenty of options to stay active. Many of these ideas can be performed without equipment that you might not already have.

- Walking briskly
- Jogging or running
- Forming an exercise group with friends
- Following YouTube exercise videos
- Dancing, Zumba, some types of yoga

Around the house

Some regular household chores can count as aerobic activity. Whether it is shoveling snow or mowing the lawn, these are a quick way to get more physical activity while knocking out some work on your to-do list.

- Shoveling
- Raking
- Vacuuming
- Mowing the lawn
- Gardening
- Scrubbing floors
- Sweeping
- Washing your car

In the water

For those looking for low-impact options, the water is a good place to start. You can modify these exercises according to your comfortability with swimming. Water weights can be added to increase the intensity, if desired.

- Water walking
- Water marching
- Wall flutter kicks
- Leg swings
- Swimming laps

Remember, you don't need swimming skills to participate in water activities.

Volunteer in the community

If you love helping people in your community, there are plenty of ways to do this while also increasing your physical activity. You could:

- Help deliver Meals on Wheels
- Load boxes at a food pantry
- Volunteer in a nursing home with those who use a wheelchair
- Clean cages in an animal shelter



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