

How active should I be?

Recommendations for different age groups

These recommendations are from the Ministry of Health.

People of all ages

Be as physically active as possible. Try to avoid activities that involve sitting for much of the time. For example, watching TV, playing video games and using a computer.

Children under 5

There are no specific guidelines for children under 5 years old but movement is important from birth. Children need to be active to develop properly – children learn from movement and physical activity.

Young people (5– to 18-year-olds)

Do at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. The activity should be moderate– or high–intensity. See below for examples of moderate– and high–intensity physical activity. Spend less than two hours a day (out of school hours) in front of the television, computers and game consoles.



Adults

Do at least 2 ½ hours of moderate–intensity or 1 ¼ hours of high–intensity physical activity spread throughout the week. One way to do this is to do 30 minutes of moderate–intensity physical activity or 15 minutes of high–intensity physical activity at least five days a week. For extra health benefits, aim to do 5 hours of moderate–intensity or 2 ½ hours of high–intensity physical activity spread throughout the week.

Do at least two sessions of muscle–strengthening activities a week. Muscle–strengthening activities include walking uphill, push ups, carrying children, and using weights or a resistance band.

If possible, add some high–intensity physical activity for extra health benefit and fitness. See below for examples of moderate– and high–intensity physical activity.



Older adults

Do at least 30 minutes of moderate–intensity physical activity at least five days a week. If possible, add some high–intensity physical activity for extra health benefit and fitness.

Do at least two sessions of muscle–strengthening activities a week. Try to add three sessions of flexibility and balance activities a week.

See below for examples of moderate– and high–intensity physical activity. Muscle–strengthening activities include walking uphill, digging the garden, and using weights or a resistance band. Flexibility and balance activities include stretching and tai chi.

You can combine some of these recommendations. For example, hill walking counts as moderate–intensity activity and muscle–strengthening activity.

Intensity of physical activity

The intensity of physical activity refers to how hard you have to work.

For more health benefits, or to lose weight, increase the amount or intensity of your daily activity.

Moderate–intensity

For moderate–intensity physical activity, you should notice your heart rate increasing. Moderate–intensity activities include walking briskly and dancing. Chores like housework and gardening can count as moderate–intensity activity if they get you out of breath or sweaty.

High–intensity

For high–intensity physical activity, your heart rate should increase a lot and you should be breathing rapidly. High–intensity activities include running, fast cycling and fast swimming.

i Local health professionals recommend the following pages.

- Active Canterbury – Being active (<http://www.activecanterbury.org.nz/being-active/>)
How everyone can improve their health and wellbeing by staying active.

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