

# Be Active Your Way VA: Physical Activity Guidelines

## Good News!

Physical activity helps you feel stronger and more alive. It is a fun way to be with your family and friends. It will also improve your health.

- Any amount of physical activity is better than none.
- The more time you are active, the more health benefits you gain.

You should set a goal of at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity per week. Try to be active for at least 10 minutes at a time. Start slowly and gradually increase your activity at your own pace.

## What do Moderate and Vigorous Intensity mean?

You are doing moderate intensity activity if you can talk, but not sing. During vigorous intensity activity you can only say a few words without stopping to catch your breath.

## Types of Activities

**Aerobic** activities are important for your health. These are activities like brisk walking, biking, swimming or dancing. Other activities include playing with your children or your grandchildren, doing housework or yard work.



**Strength and balance** activities help build strong muscles and bones and may prevent falls.

- Choose muscle strengthening activities for all parts of the body—legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders and arms--at least 2 days a week.
- Examples are lifting weights, push-ups, heavy gardening (digging, shoveling), or carrying groceries.
- Each exercise should be repeated 8-12 times per session.
- Start with no or light weights and build up at your own pace.

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For more information on muscle strengthening activities see *MOVE!* Handout P32 "Sample Strength Activity Plan for Beginners" at [www.move.va.gov](http://www.move.va.gov).

## Ways to "stick with it"

- Choose activities that you enjoy.
- If you are not active, start slowly.
- Try to rotate the types of activities you do. You can walk one day and go dancing the next.
- Ask a friend or family member to join you.

## Special situations

- Always check the weather, especially if it is very hot or very cold. You may need to wear special clothing or change the type or intensity of exercise.
- If you are disabled, choose activities that work best for you. If you have questions, talk with your healthcare team.

For more information on physical activity for adults, please visit <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines>.

