



Be Physically Active

Healthy Living Message

Being physically active is an important step that you can take to improve your health. Some physical activity is better than none, and any amount of physical activity can improve health-related fitness.

What's Important to Know?

All adults should avoid inactivity. Regular physical activity lowers the risk of depression, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, stroke, colon cancer, and breast cancer. It may also help you feel like you have more energy, stamina, and endurance. Be active for any and all reasons that are meaningful to you!

Physical activity is safe for almost everyone, and the health benefits of physical activity far outweigh the risks. Even if you are out of shape or have not been active in a long time, you can be active safely. Unless you have a chronic condition, such as diabetes, heart disease, or arthritis, or you have active symptoms, such as chest pain or pressure, dizziness, or joint pain, you do not need to talk to your health care team before activity. If you have a concern about a health condition, talk with your health care team about the types and amounts of activity that are best for you.

Physical activity is anything that gets the body moving. It can be moderate intensity, meaning you can talk while being active; or it can be vigorous intensity, meaning you cannot say more than a few words without taking a breath. Choose activities that you enjoy, and start at a comfortable level. Once the activity begins to seem easy, add a little more activity each time. Then try doing it more often.



For important health benefits, do at least 2½ hours each week of moderate-intensity, or 1¼ hours a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equal combination of both. Activity should be in episodes of at least 10 minutes, and it is best to spread these out during the week.

Do muscle strengthening activities at least twice each week, and try to use all the major muscle groups in your body—the legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders and arms. Stretching is also important and can improve flexibility, joint motion and circulation, and may relieve stress.

Want to Know More?

If you want to learn more about how to be physically active, talk with your VA health care team. They can also help if you have questions about making a healthy living change. If you would like more information about ways to be physically active and improve your health, see the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*. For more information go to: https://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Be_Physically_Active.asp

Resources

- VHA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP): www.prevention.va.gov
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS): <https://health.gov/paguidelines/>
- Veterans Health Library: www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov
- HHS - President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition: www.fitness.gov/be-active/
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/index.html
- Exercise and Physical Activity | National Institute on Aging (nih.gov): www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity