

Movement is Medicine: Making Exercise A Habit

What does it mean to be physically active?

Physical activity simply means movement of the body that uses energy. Walking, gardening, climbing the stairs, playing soccer, or dancing are all good examples of being active.

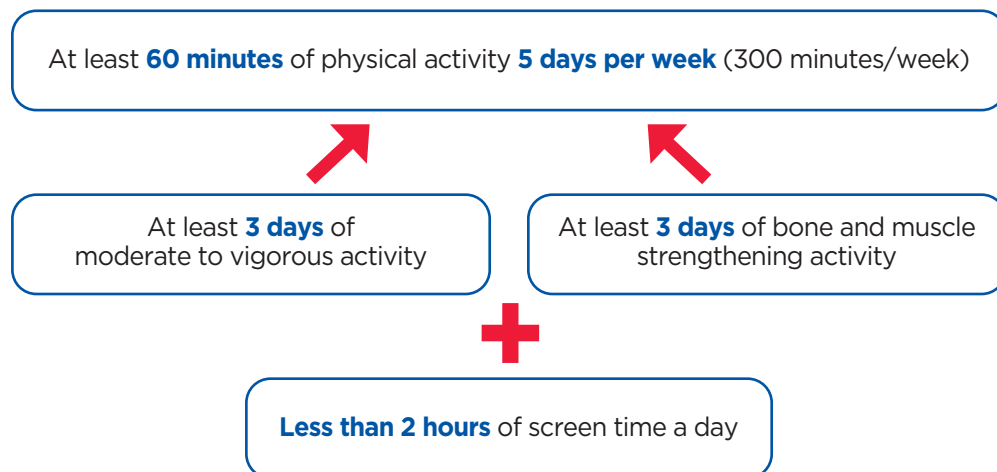
Exercise means movement of the body to improve health. This includes any movement that works your body at a greater intensity than your usual level of daily activity. Exercise raises your heart rate and works your muscles. It involves planned and structured repetitive movements designed to improve fitness and health. Exercise should be moderate or vigorous in intensity (makes you breathe harder and your heartbeat faster).

Types of Exercise:

- **Aerobic Exercise:** This includes endurance type activity, rhythmic, sustained for extended periods (walking, jogging, swimming, biking)
- **Resistance Exercise:** This includes weight training with dumbbells, bands, machines, jumping, and explosive movements
- **Flexibility Exercise:** Stretching and yoga

Intensity of exercise is very important. Moderate intensity includes brisk walking, lap swimming, volleyball, slow aerobics, moderate cycling, doubles tennis, and shooting basketball. Vigorous intensity includes jogging, running, singles tennis, playing basketball, jumping rope, fast aerobics, and soccer.

Regular physical activity at the correct intensity is very powerful in maintaining and improving health. We should aim to have at least 1 hour of physical activity 5 days per week, and less than 2 hours of screen time/sedentary time daily.



The **MyActivity Pyramid** shows us ways to reduce inactivity and increase all types of physical activity.

How Can We Start Right Now?

1. Walk whenever possible. Here are some ideas:

- Walk to school
- Take a family walk after dinner
- Replace a Sunday drive with a Sunday walk
- Walk in place for a half-hour of your TV time
- Get off the bus a stop early and walk
- Park farther from the store and walk
- Make a Saturday morning walk a family habit
- Walk briskly in the mall
- Go up hills instead of around them

2. Live actively

- Choose an activity that fits into your daily life
- Join an exercise group or a community sports team
- Have a crunch or squat competition with your family
- Dance to music...have a family dance competition
- Try new physical activities
- Give yourself a non-food reward like going to the zoo
- Swim with your family
- Take the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator

3. Move more at home

- Do yard work
- Help with active chores such as sweeping, vacuuming
- Help wash the car by hand
- Help carry the groceries
- Reduce screen time and play outside instead
- Play active Simon Says or charades with your family—you can add weights, too
- Use an exercise video if the weather is bad
- Try an obstacle course using household items like zigzagging around plastic cups



How to Plan Your Physical Activity

You can build up to your physical activity goals by doing 10-15 minutes at a time. Start by choosing a goal that you would like to work towards now and choose a long-term goal that you would like to reach in the future. Make active plans with your family, it is easier to meet your goals when you have support!

Make a Goal

Using the ideas above (or your own ideas!), talk with your family about one way that you can 1) walk more, 2) live actively and 3) move more at home.

Do you feel ready to set a new physical activity goal? Start by making it something you feel like you really can achieve – even if it feels like a small goal. Then you can keep building on the goal from there to increase physical activity over time.

My physical activity goal: _____