



Physical Activity Recommended Levels

These recommendations below are currently the recognised recommendations accessible to people in the UK and were published in July 2011. These recommendations form part of “Start Active, Stay Active”, Chief Medical Officers for the UK, July 2011

The Chief Medical Officers (CMO) for the UK recommend that:-

Adults (19-64)

- Should aim to be active daily. Over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2 ½ hours) of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more – one way to approach this is to do 30 minutes on at least 5 days a week
- Alternatively, comparable benefits can be achieved through 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity spread across the week or combinations of moderate and vigorous intensity activity.
- Adults should also undertake physical activity to improve muscle strength on at least 2 days a week
- All adults should also minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods

Older Adults (65+)

- Older adults who participate in any amount of physical activity gain some health benefits, including maintenance of good physical and cognitive function. Some physical activity is better than none, and more physical activity provides greater health benefits.
- Older adults should aim to be active daily. Over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2 ½ hours) of moderate intensity in bouts of 10 minutes or more – one way to approach this is to do 30 minutes on at least 5 days a week
- For those who are already regularly active at moderate intensity, comparable benefits can be achieved through 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity spread across the week or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity.
- Older adults should also undertake physical activity to improve muscle strength on at least 2 days a week
- Older adults at risk of falls should incorporate physical activity to improve balance and co-ordination on at least 2 days a week
- All older adults should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

Children and Young People (5-18)

- All children and young people should engage in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes and up to several hours every day.
- Vigorous intensity activities, including those that strengthen muscle and bone, should be incorporated at least 3 days a week.
- All children and young people should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods

Under 5s (capable of walking)

- Children of pre-school age who are capable of walking unaided should be physically active daily for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day.*
- All under 5s should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except time spent sleeping)



Under 5s (not capable of walking)

- Physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor-based play and water based activities in safe environments
- All under 5s should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except time spent sleeping)

A person who is doing moderate intensity activity will usually experience:

- an increase in breathing rate,
- an increase in heart rate, to the level where the pulse can be felt, and
- a feeling of increased warmth, possibly accompanied by sweating on hot or humid days.

A person who is doing vigorous intensity activity will usually:

- be breathing very hard and be short of breath
- have a rapid heartbeat
- be unable to carry on a conversation.

You can find out more detail from the Start Active, Stay Active publication, July 2011, http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_128209 or <http://www.bhfactive.org.uk/news-item/75/index.html>

"Physical activity includes all forms of activity, such as everyday walking or cycling to get from A to B, active recreation not undertaken competitively, such as working out in the gym, dancing, gardening or families playing together, as well as organised and competitive sport.

What unites all physical activity is its effect upon our bodies, raising our heart rate, bringing about an immediate and often beneficial physiological response and improving our overall well-being. Indeed, the mental health benefits of physical activity are often overlooked." (p10, Department of Health, 2009, Be Active Be Healthy)

There is something suitable for everyone and doesn't mean you have to be 'sporty' to 'participate' and be active.

Everyday physical activity, as well as active recreational and sporting activities, can also be really beneficial if done at the moderate intensity activity level for general health benefit. Doing these activities at a lighter intensity level can still be beneficial. At the moderate or indeed vigorous intensity level it can contribute towards achieving the minimum recommendations, as outlined above. These types of activities include occupational (active/manual work) activity, gardening, walking and cycling to work, school and other destinations as part of everyday life. Others include parking and getting off the bus further away from destinations and walking, stair walking rather than using the lift, dog walking, car washing, some housework and D.I.Y.