Physical Activity Pyramid

It is important to balance what you eat with your physical activity, according to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid, USDA’s latest food guide pyramid. This is the first time that USDA Food Guidance makes recommendations for physical activity.

Nutrition and physical activity work together for your better health. The person climbing the steps on the side of MyPyramid represents YOU being active every day.

Importance of Physical Activity

Being physically active can help you live a longer, healthier, happier life. Adding physical activity to your day can:

- help you reach and maintain a healthy weight by burning calories*
- lower your risk for chronic disease, such as coronary heart disease**, stroke, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and colon cancer
- help control blood pressure
- lower your risk for a heart attack
- help you feel good about yourself
- reduce stress, anxiety and depression
- improve your fitness level
- increase muscle strength
- reduce body fat
- help build and maintain bones and joints
- improve flexibility and posture
- help prevent arthritis or relieve the pain from it
- reduce the risk of falling among older adults

*Research show that combining a reduced-calorie diet with exercise is the most effective way to lose weight.

**Regular exercise can raise levels of HDL, the good blood cholesterol. It also lowers levels of triglycerides, another fat in the blood (different from cholesterol) that increases heart disease risk. Therefore, if you have high HDL and lower triglyceride levels, then you are less likely to develop heart disease.

What is Physical Activity?

Physical activity means moving your body to use energy. Good examples are: walking, dancing, playing soccer, briskly pushing a baby stroller, and even gardening. It does not have to be strenuous.

Amounts of Activity Recommended in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans:

- **30 minutes daily**—reduces risk of chronic disease in adulthood.
- **60 minutes on most days**—prevents weight gain, if you do not increase calories eaten. This must be moderate to vigorous exercise.
- **90 minutes** (or at least 60 minutes) daily—will lead to weight loss. The level of exercise must be moderate to vigorous.

For health benefits, adults should get at least 30 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity most days, or preferably every day. This is above and beyond normal daily activity, unless your job includes lots of vigorous physical activity. For most people, greater health benefits are achieved by exercising more vigorously or for a longer time.

Children and teenagers need at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day, or most days. Pregnant
women should get 30 minutes or more of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, or all, days of the week, unless they have medical complications. Like all adults, senior citizens benefit from physical activity, which helps reduce functional declines associated with aging.

Levels of Physical Activity: There are two basic levels of physical activity.

Moderate: This includes walking briskly (about 3½ miles per hour), hiking, gardening/yard work, dancing, golf (walking and carrying clubs), bicycling (less than 10 miles per hour), and weight training (a general light workout).

Vigorous: Examples are running/jogging (5 miles per hour), bicycling (more than 10 miles per hour), swimming (freestyle laps), aerobics, fast walking (4½ miles per hour), weight lifting (vigorous effort), competitive basketball, and heavy yard work, such as chopping wood.

If a physical activity does not increase your heart rate, it is not intense enough to count towards the 30 or more minutes a day that you should get. Activities that do not increase your heart rate include walking at a casual pace, grocery shopping, and doing light household chores.

Before Beginning an Exercise Program: Most adults do not need a doctor’s checkup before exercising at a moderate level. Exceptions include people with heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, osteoporosis and obesity. A high fat diet, smoking, and a sedentary lifestyle are other risk factors. Men over 40 and women over 50 should see their doctor or health care provider before starting a vigorous physical activity program. Get advice on how often and how long to exercise.

Types of Physical Activities
These activities are very beneficial to your health.

Aerobic Activities: These speed your heart rate and breathing while improving heart and lung fitness. Examples: brisk walking, jogging and swimming.

Resistance, Strength Building, and Weight-Bearing Activities: These help build and maintain bones and muscles by working them against gravity. Lifting weights, carrying a child, and walking are a few examples.

Balance and Stretching Activities: Dancing, gentle stretching, yoga, martial arts, and t'ai chi reduce risk of injuries by improving physical stability and flexibility.

Calories Used
A 154-pound man (5’ 10”) will use the number of calories listed doing each activity below. A person who weighs more will use more calories, and someone who weighs less will use fewer calories.

Approximate Calories Used By A 154-Pound Man*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moderate Physical Activities</th>
<th>In 1 Hour</th>
<th>In 30 Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hiking</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yard work/light gardening,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>golf (walking and carrying</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clubs), dancing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bicycling (less than 10</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miles per hour)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walking (3½ miles per hour)</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight training (general light</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workout)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stretching</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vigorous Physical Activities:</th>
<th>In 1 Hour</th>
<th>In 30 Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>running/jogging (5 miles per</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hour) Bicycling (more than 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miles per hour)</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swimming (slow freestyle laps)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aerobics</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walking (4½ miles per hour)</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heavy yard work (chopping</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wood), weight lifting (</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vigorous effort), basketball</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vigorous)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* includes calories used by activity and for normal body functioning

Thirty minutes per day of moderate intensity physical activity provides many health benefits. However, even greater health benefits can be gained through more vigorous exercise or by staying active for a longer time. This also burns more calories. Regardless of the activity you choose, you can do it all at once or divide it into two or three parts during the day.
Be physically active at least 10 minutes at a time, because shorter bursts of activity will not have the same health benefits. For example, walk your dog for 10 minutes before and after work, and go for a 10-minute walk at lunchtime. That adds up to 30 minutes of moderate exercise for the day. If you don’t have a dog to walk, then you could take a brisk 10-minute walk to and from the parking lot or bus stop before and after work.

**Ways to Get Moving**

- The more you enjoy exercise, the more likely you are to stick to it. Many activities that you enjoy can be worked into your daily routine so that you don’t have to go to the gym or an aerobics class.
- Always be prepared. Keep a pair of walking or running shoes and some comfortable clothes in the car and at the office.
- Walk! Do it in your neighborhood, find a local trail, or go to the mall and walk around before you shop. Walk during your lunch break or to do your errands. Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator. Park in the farthest parking spot and walk to the office or store.
- Make exercise a social event. Walk with your spouse, a family member, neighbor or friend to make it more fun. Take group dancing lessons.
- Incorporate exercise into your work day. Do simple stretching and calisthenics exercises at your desk. Jumping rope is a cheap exercise that can be done anywhere, even in a hotel room on a business trip.
- Participate in a sport such as tennis, softball, basketball or touch football. Play golf, but push or carry your golf bag rather than ride in a golf cart. Jog or join an exercise class. Keep your activities interesting by trying something different on alternate days.
- Do household chores for exercise. Vacuuming, mopping, and dusting can be quite a workout. Mow the lawn with a push mower, garden, rake leaves, or wash and wax your car.
- Make exercise a family activity. Get outdoors and hike, ride bikes, skate, swim, go canoeing, sailing, snorkeling or horseback riding together.

**Physical Activities for Children**

Nearly half of American youths aged 12-21 years are not vigorously active on a regular basis. Children and teenagers need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity every day, or on most days. Here are some ideas to get them moving:

- dance
- play tag
- jump rope
- ride a bicycle or tricycle
- swim
- roller skate or roller blade
- play actively during school recess
- participate in physical ed. class at school
- join an after-school or community physical activity program
- be spontaneously active

**Your Challenge**

- Although the benefits of physical activity have been proven, over 50% of U.S. adults do not get enough physical activity to provide health benefits, and 26% are not active at all in their leisure time.
- Are you active enough for a healthy life? It’s important to be active most days of the week and make physical activity a part of your daily routine. Do anything that gets you up and moving.
- Want to manage your weight? Then find your balance between the food you eat and your level of physical activity. To prevent weight gain, you should get about 60 minutes of moderate physical activity per day. If you have lost weight and want to maintain the weight loss, you may need to increase it to 60 to 90 minutes a day while consuming only the amount of calories your body needs.
- You don’t have to be a jock to be healthy; but you do need to place regular activity high on your "to do" list. Starting today, make one positive change. Then keep it up!

For more information, request: HGIC 4000, 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans; HGIC 4010, MyPyramid; HGIC 4011, MyPyramid for Kids; HGIC 4031, Physical Activity for Adults; HGIC 4032, Physical Activity for Children; HGIC 4151, Fluid Needs.
Sources:

4. Georgia State University, Department of Kinesiology and Health. The Exercise and Physical Fitness Page. http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwfit/physicalactivity.html

This information has been reviewed and adapted for use in South Carolina by J. G. Hunter, HGIC Information Specialist, and K. L. Cason, Professor, State EFNEP Coordinator, Clemson University. (New 01/06.)

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