

Physical activity guidelines for

EARLY YEARS (UNDER 5s) – FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE CAPABLE OF WALKING

1. 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.*
2. All under 5s should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (being restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except time spent sleeping).

* Most UK pre-school children currently spend 120–150 minutes a day in physical activity, so achieving this guideline would mean adding another 30–60 minutes per day.

Individual physical and mental capabilities should be considered when interpreting the guidelines.

Examples of physical activity that meet the guidelines

Physical activity is likely to occur mainly through unstructured active play but may also include more structured activities. Activities can be of any intensity (light or more energetic) and may include:

- Activities which involve movements of all the major muscle groups, i.e. the legs, buttocks, shoulders and arms, and movement of the trunk from one place to another
- Energetic play, e.g. climbing frame or riding a bike
- More energetic bouts of activity, e.g. running and chasing games
- Walking/skipping to shops, a friend's home, a park or to and from a school

Minimising sedentary behaviour may include:

- Reducing time spent watching TV, using the computer or playing video games
- Reducing time spent in a pushchair or car seat – this can also help to break up long periods of sedentary behaviour

What are the benefits of being active for at least 180 minutes each day?

- Improves cardiovascular health
- Contributes to a healthy weight
- Improves bone health
- Supports learning of social skills
- Develops movement and co-ordination

For further information: *Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers* (2011)

Physical activity guidelines for

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (5–18 YEARS)



1. 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.
2. Vigorous intensity activities, including those that strengthen muscle and bone, should be incorporated at least three days a week.
3. All children and young people should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

Individual physical and mental capabilities should be considered when interpreting the guidelines.

Examples of physical activity that meet the guidelines

Moderate intensity physical activities will cause children to get warmer and breathe harder and their hearts to beat faster, but they should still be able to carry on a conversation. Examples include:

- Bike riding
- Playground activities

Vigorous intensity physical activities will cause children to get warmer and breathe much harder and their hearts to beat rapidly, making it more difficult to carry on a conversation. Examples include:

- Fast running
- Sports such as swimming or football

Physical activities that strengthen muscle and bone involve using body weight or working against a resistance. Examples include:

- Swinging on playground equipment
- Hopping and skipping
- Sports such as gymnastics or tennis

Minimising sedentary behaviour may include:

- Reducing time spent watching TV, using the computer or playing video games
- Breaking up sedentary time such as swapping a long bus or car journey for walking part of the way

What are the benefits of being active for at least 60 minutes each day?

- Improves cardiovascular health
- Maintains a healthy weight
- Improves bone health
- Improves self-confidence
- Develops new social skills

For further information: *Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers (2011)*

Physical activity guidelines for

ADULTS (19–64 YEARS)



1. Adults should aim to be active daily. Over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2½ 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.
2. 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.
3. Adults should also undertake physical activity to improve muscle strength on at least two days a week.
4. All adults should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

Individual physical and mental capabilities should be considered when interpreting the guidelines.

Examples of physical activity that meet the guidelines

Moderate intensity physical activities will cause adults to get warmer and breathe harder and their hearts to beat faster, but they should still be able to carry on a conversation. Examples include:

- Brisk walking
- Cycling

Vigorous intensity physical activities will cause adults to get warmer and breathe much harder and their hearts to beat rapidly, making it more difficult to carry on a conversation. Examples include:

- Running
- Sports such as swimming or football

Physical activities that strengthen muscles involve using body weight or working against a resistance. This should involve using all the major muscle groups. Examples include:

- Exercising with weights
- Carrying or moving heavy loads such as groceries

Minimising sedentary behaviour may include:

- Reducing time spent watching TV, using the computer or playing video games
- Taking regular breaks at work
- Breaking up sedentary time such as swapping a long bus or car journey for walking part of the way

What are the benefits of being active daily?

- Reduces risk of a range of diseases, e.g. coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes
- Helps maintain a healthy weight
- Helps maintain ability to perform everyday tasks with ease
- Improves self-esteem
- Reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety

For further information: *Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers* (2011)

Physical activity guidelines for

OLDER ADULTS (65+ YEARS)



- 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 (2½ 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.
- 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 two days a week.
- Older adults at risk of falls should incorporate physical activity to improve balance and co-ordination on at least two days a week.
- All older adults should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

Individual physical and mental capabilities should be considered when interpreting the guidelines.

Examples of physical activity that meet the guidelines

Moderate intensity physical activities will cause older adults to get warmer and breathe harder and their hearts to beat faster, but they should still be able to carry on a conversation.

Examples include:

- Brisk walking
- Ballroom dancing

Vigorous intensity physical activities will cause older adults to get warmer and breathe much harder and their hearts to beat rapidly, making it more difficult to carry on a conversation. Examples include:

- Climbing stairs
- Running

Physical activities that strengthen muscles involve using body weight or working against a resistance. This should involve using all the major muscle groups. Examples include:

- Carrying or moving heavy loads such as groceries
- Activities that involve stepping and jumping such as dancing
- Chair aerobics

Activities to improve balance and co-ordination may include:

- Tai chi
- Yoga

Minimising sedentary behaviour may include:

- Reducing time spent watching TV
- Taking regular walk breaks around the garden or street
- Breaking up sedentary time such as swapping a long bus or car journey for walking part of the way

What are the benefits of being active daily?

- Helps maintain cognitive function
- Reduces cardiovascular risk
- Helps maintain ability to carry out daily living activities
- Improves mood and can improve self-esteem
- Reduces the risk of falls

For further information: *Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers* (2011)