

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES FOR ADULTS AND OLDER ADULTS



Regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. It can help prevent many of the health problems that often come with age such as heart disease, diabetes and stroke. It also helps improve mood, balance, muscle strength and energy levels so you can keep doing your day-to-day activities more easily.

Current Guidelines state adults and older adults should:

- Aim to be physically active every day. Even if it's just light activity, some physical activity is always better than none.
- Do at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity a week, or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity (if you are already active), or a combination of both.
- Do at least two days a week of activities that improve strength, balance and flexibility.

What counts as light activity?

Light activity is essentially moving rather than sitting or lying down. Examples include: getting up to make a cup of tea, light housework, walking at a slow pace, standing up.

What counts as moderate intensity activity?

Any activity that raises your heart rate, makes you breathe faster and feel warmer. You should not be so out of breath that talking becomes difficult. Examples include: Walking briskly, riding a bike, dancing, water aerobics or light swimming, pushing a lawnmower.

What counts as vigorous intensity activity?

Any activity that makes you breathe hard and fast. At this level, you

will not be able to say more than a few words without pausing for breath. Deliberately increasing the effort in most moderate activities can make it vigorous. Examples include: running, aerobics, swimming, riding a bike fast or on hills, hiking uphill, tennis.

What activities are good for strength, balance and flexibility?

Some moderate or vigorous activities already include strength, balance and flexibility benefits.

There are lots of ways you can improve muscle strength such as carrying heavy shopping bags or doing heavy gardening such as digging or shovelling, lifting weights, using resistance bands or doing exercises that use your own body weight.

A combination of balance, flexibility and strength can be helped by doing specific home exercises or attending classes such as Tai Chi, Pilates or Yoga.

An example week which meets recommended activity levels might include: one 30-minute brisk walk five days per week, gardening once and attending one exercise class.

If you haven't exercised for a long time, or if you have a health condition, you should check with your GP before starting something new. If you have an injury or physical condition which is preventing you from starting or making you anxious about starting, then you can arrange an appointment with one of the Physiotherapists at PRRT who will be able to guide you in the right direction.

PRRT is based at Maryfield, Holywood and provides psychology, physiotherapy, personal development and training to the retired police population. PSNI employees can access our Physiotherapy service via referrals from PSNI occupational health. Serving officers can access personal development and training directly. For further information or to make an appointment please call 028 9042 7788.

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