

Physical inactivity is now identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality. Physical inactivity levels are rising in many countries with major implications for the prevalence of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and the general health of the population worldwide.

The significance of physical activity on public health, the global mandates for the work carried out by WHO in relation to promotion of physical activity and NCD prevention, and the limited existence of national guidelines on physical activity for health in low- and middle-income countries make evident the need for the development of global recommendations that address the links between the frequency, duration, intensity, type and total amount of physical activity needed for the prevention of NCDs.

The focus of The Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health is primary prevention of NCDs through physical activity at population level, and the primary target audience for these recommendations are policy-makers at national level.

Overall, across all the age groups, the benefits of implementing the above recommendations, and of being physically active, outweigh the harms. At the recommended level of 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity activity, musculoskeletal injury rates appear to be uncommon. In a population-based approach, in order to decrease the risks of musculoskeletal injuries, it is appropriate to encourage a moderate start with gradual progress to higher levels of physical activity.

Physical activity should not be mistaken for sport

Physical activity is any bodily movement produced by the skeletal muscles that uses energy. This includes sports, exercise and other activities such as playing, walking, doing household chores or gardening.

What is Moderate-intensity and Vigorous-intensity Physical Activity?

Intensity refers to the rate at which the activity is being performed. It can be thought of as "how hard a person works to do the activity". The intensity of different forms of physical activity varies between people. Depending on an individual's relative level of fitness, examples of moderate physical activity could include: brisk walking, dancing or household chores. Examples of vigorous physical activity could be: running, fast cycling, fast swimming or moving heavy loads.

What does accumulating physical activity throughout the week mean?

The concept of accumulation refers to meeting the goal of 60 minutes per day or 150 minutes per week by performing activities in multiple shorter bouts spread throughout the day. For example, to meet the goal of 60 minutes of physically activity daily, children can do two bouts of 30 minutes in different times of the day. Likewise, adults can meet the 150 minutes weekly goal by doing 30 minutes of physical activity five times per week.

Doing some physical activity is better than doing none

Inactive people should start with small amounts of physical activity and gradually increase duration, frequency and intensity over time. Inactive adults, older adults and those with disease limitations will have added health benefits when they become more active.

For further information see:
<http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/pa/en/index.html>
or contact WHO on dietandhealth@who.int



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GLOBAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR HEALTH

