

Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health

65 years and above

These guidelines are relevant to all healthy adults aged 65 years and above, unless specific medical conditions indicate to the contrary, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity or income level. They are also relevant to individuals in this age range with chronic NCD conditions or with disabilities. Individuals with specific health conditions, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, may need to take extra precautions and seek medical advice before trying to achieve the recommended levels of physical activity for older adults.

Strong evidence demonstrates that compared to less active men and women, older adults who are physically active have:

- lower rates of coronary heart disease, hypertension, stroke, diabetes, colon and breast cancer, a higher level of cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness,
- healthier body mass and composition and enhanced bone health; and
- higher levels of functional health, a lower risk of falling, and better cognitive function.

Recommendations:

In older adults of the 65 years and above age group, physical activity includes leisure time physical activity, transportation (e.g. walking or cycling), occupational (if the individual is still engaged in work), household chores, play, games, sports or planned exercise, in the context of daily, family, and community activities.

The recommendations in order to improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness, bone and functional health, reduce the risk of NCDs, depression and cognitive decline are:

1. Older adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or do at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity.
2. Aerobic activity should be performed in bouts of at least 10 minutes duration.
3. For additional health benefits, older adults should increase their moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity to 300 minutes per week, or engage in 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity.
4. Older adults, with poor mobility, should perform physical activity to enhance balance and prevent falls on 3 or more days per week.
5. Muscle-strengthening activities, involving major muscle groups, should be done on 2 or more days a week.
6. When older adults cannot do the recommended amounts of physical activity due to health conditions, they should be as physically active as their abilities and conditions allow.

Inactive people should start with small amounts of physical activity and gradually increase duration, frequency and intensity over time. Inactive 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

