

How Much Daily Exercise Do You Really Need?



(HealthDay News) -- Hopefully, you enjoy exercising and don't watch the clock, impatient for it to be over.

But it's important to know how much exercise you're getting so you can reap all its health rewards.

Between the ages of 18 and 64, barring any medical restrictions, the weekly goal is at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity cardio (aerobic) exercise, or 75 minutes if the activity is vigorous, plus two or three strength-training sessions.

For older adults, it's even better to shoot for five hours (300 minutes) each week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity and weight training/muscle-strengthening activities on two or more days a week, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Moderate-intensity cardio raises your heart rate and causes you to break a sweat -- you'll be able to talk, but not sing the words to a song. With vigorous-intensity cardio, you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.

Moderate-intensity exercises:

- Brisk walking
- Water aerobics
- Cycling on mostly level ground
- Doubles tennis

Vigorous-intensity exercises:

- Jogging or running
- Swimming laps
- Cycling fast or on hills
- Singles tennis
- Basketball

While the amount of exercise time will stay consistent until your senior years, your target heart rate goes down slightly as you get older since it's based in part on your age.

There's no time minimum or maximum for strength training sessions. It's however long it takes to work all your major muscle groups: legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms.

To preserve mobility and prevent falls, include exercises that enhance balance on three or more days every week.

If you can't do the recommended amounts because of a health condition, be as physically active as you can, and work with your doctor on ways to get some movement into each day.

One final thought: the more you exercise, the bigger the payoff.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more specifics on the best amount of exercise for optimal health. <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/adults/>

-- Len Canter

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Exercise Options That Double as Stress-Busters



(HealthDay News) -- Exercise is a known stress buster, and different disciplines relax and tone you in a variety of ways. So, you can pick and choose from many types of exercise to go beyond physical fitness to better mental health.

Exercise's mind-body boosts:

- Improves your mood by releasing natural feel-good chemicals.
- Decreases tension in your muscles.
- Leads to deeper, more restorative sleep.

Now for the specifics. Studies show that a cardio workout is not only good for the heart, but also for the mind, decreasing stress. Whether you work out in one daily 30-minute session or three separate 10-minute sessions, moderate-intensity activities like walking, dancing, using the elliptical or pedaling on a stationary bike do the trick.

Yoga gets the top nod for its mind-body balance -- the combination of deep breathing and stretching enhances flexibility and mood. Just remember that yoga isn't a

substitute for cardio because it typically doesn't raise your heart rate. So think of it as an add-on.

Chinese traditions are at the heart of tai chi, a combination of martial arts and meditation. For the biggest benefit, the American College of Sports Medicine recommends learning from a qualified teacher and practicing on your own between classes.



Head-to-toe stretching is important for flexibility and, like yoga, it draws on breathing and focus, making it a relaxing way to end every workout. If you carry tension in your neck and shoulders, be sure to target these areas.

The common thread of all these exercises is deep breathing, slowly filling your belly as you inhale and flattening it as you exhale. This increases the amount of oxygen in your blood, which in turn supplies energy to your muscles. And that's an exercise you can practice any time.

More information: The Anxiety and Depression Association of America has detailed information on how exercise can help ease stress and boost mental fitness for everyone. <https://adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/managing-anxiety/exercise-stress-and-anxiety>

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Health Tip: Enjoy a Healthy Pumpkin Treat



(HealthDay News) -- Pumpkins are a sure sign of fall, but they're good for more than carving on Halloween. Pumpkins add flavor to foods, and they are a good source of potassium and vitamins C and A.

Try these pumpkin recipes, courtesy of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:

- Blend fat-free milk, pumpkin, frozen vanilla yogurt and a sprinkle of pumpkin pie spice or cinnamon to create a healthy pumpkin smoothie.
- Make pumpkin pancakes by adding canned pumpkin or fresh-cooked pumpkin to your favorite pancake recipe.
- Bake healthier muffins and breads by substituting 1/4 cup canned pumpkin in place of egg.
- Make pumpkin soup by combining mashed, cooked pumpkin with fat free low-sodium chicken broth, evaporated fat-free milk, onion and nutmeg.
- Make homemade pumpkin ravioli by stuffing shells with canned pumpkin and freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

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