

Aging and Health Matters:

The Importance of Physical Activity for Older Adults

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Montrece Ransom] Welcome to Aging and Health Matters. I'm your host, Montrece Ransom.

Physical activity is one of the best things people can do to improve their health and quality of life. It's the closest thing we have to a wonder drug. Regular physical activity is linked to a lower risk of many chronic diseases, including heart disease, some cancers, and even Alzheimer's disease. People may feel better each time they are active.

Today, I'm in the studio with CDC's David Brown, a senior behavioral scientist with the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. We're talking about the most recent Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, how much activity people should be getting, and the types of activities recommended for older adults. Welcome, David!

[David Brown] Thanks for having me, Montrece.

[Montrece Ransom] David, physical activity is linked to many health benefits as highlighted in the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. Why is it especially important for older adults to be physically active?

[David Brown] Physical activity can help us feel better, age better, and improve our quality of life so we can keep doing the things we enjoy. Benefits include improved muscle strength, bone health, and physical function which are especially important for helping older adults prevent falls and maintain independence for as long as possible.

[Montrece Ransom] It's been 10 years since the Physical Activity Guidelines were updated. What's new?

25 [David Brown] For older adults, the updated Guidelines discuss additional health benefits
26 for physical activity. They include a lower risk of Alzheimer's disease and related
27 dementias, reduced risk of falls, reduced anxiety, better sleep, and an overall
28 improvement in quality of life.

29 There's now greater evidence that all adults should simply move more and sit less
30 throughout the day. Adults who do any amount of moderate-to-vigorous intensity
31 physical activity, such as walking, can obtain health benefits.

32 New findings highlight that a single session of physical activity can lead to some
33 immediate benefits. People are less anxious, have lower blood pressure, and may sleep
34 better. Physical activity can be as simple as a brisk walk around the park with your
35 grandchildren.

36 [Montrece Ransom] What types of physical activity should older adults do to gain health
37 benefits?

38 [David Brown] Adults 65 and older should do different types of physical activity that
39 includes aerobic, muscle strengthening, and balance activities. Aerobic activities include
40 walking, dancing, swimming, and water aerobics. Muscle strengthening activities include
41 lifting weights, working with resistance bands, and gardening. And balance activities
42 include walking heel-to-toe, standing from a sitting position, and standing on one leg. We
43 recommend that older adults with chronic conditions talk to their health care provider
44 before starting a physical activity program.

45 [Montrece Ransom] How much activity should adults be doing?

46 [David Brown] To get the most benefits, all adults should do at least 150 to 300 minutes a
47 week of moderate-intensity activities, such as walking or bicycling, or vigorous activity
48 for 75 to 150 minutes a week. For example, walking at least 22 minutes every day; or

49 running 15 minutes a day, five days a week. All adults should do muscle strengthening
50 activities 2 or 3 days a week, and older adults should add balance activities.

51 If you're unable to do the recommended amount of physical activity because of a chronic
52 condition or disability, do as much as you can.

53 [Montrece Ransom] Thanks, David. This is terrific news for older adults.

54 I've been talking today with CDC's David Brown about Physical Activity Guidelines for
55 Americans and the amount and types of physical activity older adults need to obtain
56 numerous health benefits. For more information, listeners can go to B-I-T-dot-L-Y-slash-
57 C-D-C-Older-Adults.

58 [Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.