Healthmatters  Getting every adult active every day
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1. What's recommended?

Adults in England should aim to take part in at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity each week, according to guidelines from the UK chief medical officers.

Moderate intensity physical activities, such as brisk walking or cycling, cause adults to get warmer and breathe harder and their hearts to beat faster, but they can still carry on a conversation.

As well as being physically active, all adults are advised to minimise the time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

Many adults spend in excess of seven hours per day sedentary, and this typically increases with age.

How much physical activity should you do?

All adults should undertake muscle strengthening activity, such as exercising with weights, yoga, or carrying heavy shopping at least 2 days a week.

Adults (19 to 64) should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity, in bouts of 10 minutes or more, each week.

This can also be achieved by 75 minutes of vigorous activity across the week or a mixture of moderate and vigorous.

Minimise the amount of time spent sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.
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2. How active are we?

People in the UK are around 20% less active now than in the 1960s. If current trends continue, we will be 35% less active by 2030.

We are the first generation to need to make a conscious decision to build physical activity into our daily lives.

Fewer of us have manual jobs. Technology dominates at home and at work, the two places where we spend most of our time. Societal changes have designed physical activity out of our lives.

Increasing car use is a major contributing factor to lower levels of physical activity in the UK. In 1961, 69% of households did not own a car or van, but by 2012 this had decreased to 25%.

1 in 4 women and 1 in 5 men in England are classed as physically inactive – doing less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per week.

Only 34% of men and 24% of women undertake muscle-strengthening activities at least twice a week.

Men are more likely than women to average 6 or more hours of total sedentary (sitting) time on both weekdays and at weekends.
3. What are the health benefits of physical activity?

The first Sports Strategy in 13 years heralds a new approach which shifts the balance of investment to focus more on encouraging inactive and underrepresented groups to become more active.

Any physical activity is better than none. Start small and build up gradually. As little as 10 minutes of physical activity at a time provides physical and mental health benefits.

Persuading inactive people to become more active could prevent 1 in 10 cases of stroke and heart disease in the UK and 1 in 6 deaths from any cause.

In fact it’s often said that if physical activity was a drug it would be classed as a wonder drug.
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4. How can we increase population physical activity?

PHE’s national physical activity framework, Everybody Active Every Day, identifies four areas for local and national action.

1. Active society
People are more likely to be active if it is seen as ‘normal’, and if their friends and peers are also active.

2. Moving professionals
1 in 4 patients would be more active if advised by a GP or nurse.

3. Active environments
Our homes, workplaces and local environments should be designed to encourage physically active.

4. Moving at scale
Positive change needs to happen at every level, in every region and be measurable.

Promote active travel

Incorporate physical activity into everyday life, such as walking, cycling or combining with public transport instead of travelling by car.
5. Creating an appetite for a revolution in physical activity

To scale up interventions, we need to base them on targeted community needs and then evaluate what really works.

Local health and wellbeing boards have the knowledge and understanding of their local communities and assets to make systematic implementation a reality.

Other key players include:
- health and social care commissioners
- NHS and other public sector organisations
- the sports and leisure sector
- community groups
- employers

It is important to note that this is not just about new investment – it is more about maximising existing assets.

For full references see www.gov.uk/government/collections/health-matters-public-health-issues