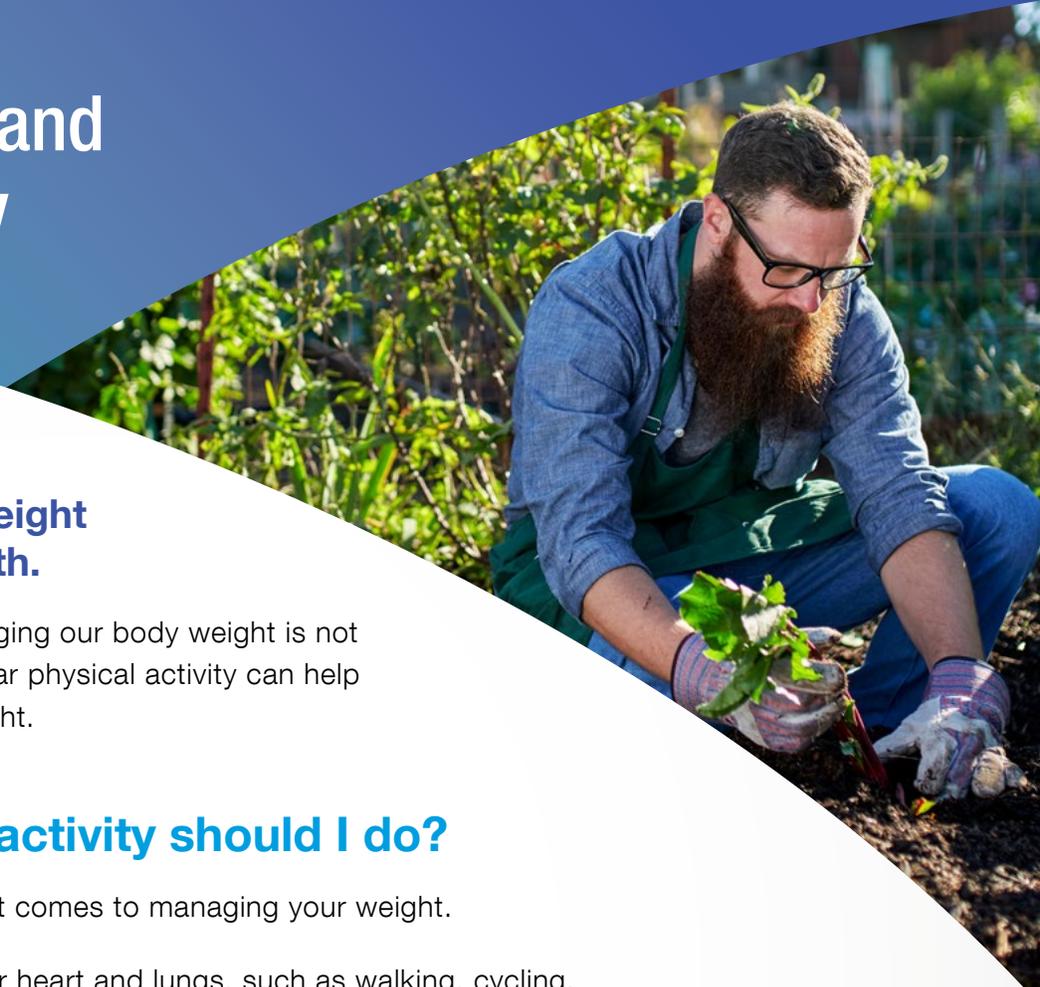


Healthy weight and physical activity



Many of us know that having a healthy body weight is important for our health.

However, we also know that managing our body weight is not easy. The good news is that regular physical activity can help you reach and keep a healthy weight.

How much physical activity should I do?

Aerobic activities are best when it comes to managing your weight.



Aerobic activities work your heart and lungs, such as walking, cycling, jogging, cross-country skiing and swimming.

You do not have to play a sport to be physically active. Walking is a great physical activity, as it is free of charge, it can be done anywhere, and it requires little equipment (only appropriate shoes and clothing for the weather). You can decide the intensity, speed, and terrain.



Resistance activities strengthen your muscles, such as resistance bands, free weights, gardening, and sit-to-stand exercises. Even small weights can improve strength, like lifting soup cans.



Balance and flexibility activities can improve your range of motion and stability, reduce your risk of falls, and prevent injury and strain, such as tai chi, pilates and yoga.

This handout for adults will explain:

- how much physical activity you should do, and
- how physical activity can help you to manage your weight.

The following table describes your physical activity “prescription” for **aerobic activities**.

Aerobic Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Warm up for 3–5 minutes *before* aerobic exercise.
- Aim for **150–300 minutes of aerobic activity per week**. For example, 150 minutes can be:
 - ▶ 10 minutes, 6 times/day for 5 days,
 - ▶ 30 minutes/day for 5 days, or
 - ▶ 50 minutes/day for 3 days.
- Cool down for 3-5 minutes *after* aerobic exercise.

HOW HARD?

- Aim for a *moderate-to-vigorous* intensity level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats faster,
 - ▶ your body feels warmer,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ your breathing is deeper.
 - ▶ you can still talk easily, but not sing.

What aerobic activities would you like to do?

Aim for 150-300 minutes of aerobic activities per week.



Resistance Physical Activity

Resistance activities strengthens your muscles, such as training with free weights and resistance bands, or using your own body as resistance (for example, going from sitting to standing, or climbing stairs).

Work all your major muscle groups

It is important to do resistance activities for all of your major muscles.

- Choose 6–10 different activities for each session.
- Start at an intensity and duration that is safe for you.
- Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.
- Alternate between muscle groups to speed up your workout by allowing some muscles to rest while you work others. For example, you can choose a lower body exercise, such as squats, followed by an upper body exercise, such as chest presses.
- If you feel pain or cannot complete your set, the intensity may be too high. Reduce the weight you are using or the number of repetitions you are doing.
- Over time, you can slowly increase the number of sets that you do for each activity or slowly increase how much you lift.

Do each exercise slowly in a controlled way.



The following table describes your resistance physical activity “prescription”.

Resistance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

- Do one “set” of an exercise for 10-15 repetitions, such as 10-15 squats.
- Aim for:
 - ▶ 6–10 different resistance exercises,
 - ▶ 2–4 sets of *each* exercise per session,
 - ▶ at least 20 minutes per session,
 - ▶ 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

- Aim to work at a *moderate-intensity* level. This means:
 - ▶ your heart beats slightly faster than when you are resting,
 - ▶ you are sweating lightly,
 - ▶ breathing is deeper and faster.
- Your muscles should feel exhausted by the end of the set, that is, you cannot do another repetition.
- *Rest* for
 - ▶ 2–4 minutes before starting a new set or muscle group,
 - ▶ at least 1 day between resistance training sessions.

What resistance physical activities would you like to do?

Note: A qualified exercise professional can show you what exercises work best for you and how to work at a safe intensity.

Balance Physical Activity

Balance is important as you age and can be practiced daily or as often as possible. Balance activities improve your motor skills and coordination, as well as reduce your risk of falling. They can be simple exercises, such as standing on one leg. They can include resistance or flexibility activities that emphasize balance and coordination, such as tai chi, pilates or yoga.

Activities should be challenging, but you should not feel unsafe, like you are about to fall. If you are at risk of falls, use supports, such as a chair or walker while doing the activities.

Examples of seated activities:

- range of motion exercises using arms and legs, such as arm or leg circles,
- coordinated movement of arms and legs.

Examples of standing exercises that can be done with or without hand support:

- standing on one foot,
- standing with feet close together,
- sit-to-stand,
- dynamic movements, such as kicking and catching,
- walking sideways and backwards or walking on or near a line.

Balance Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 15–30 minutes per session,
- 2–3 days per week.

HOW HARD?

Aim for a *moderate-intensity level*. This means the activities:

- are challenging,
- require concentration, and
- may require you to hold a chair or wall for support sometimes.

What balance physical activities would you like to do?

Flexibility Physical Activity

Flexibility physical activity improves your range of motion. Daily flexibility activity is the most effective.

Do a variety of stretches that target both upper and lower body muscle groups. Include some stretching regularly in your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.

If the stretching activities are too hard, ask an exercise professional how to adapt them to match your level of flexibility.

Flexibility Physical Activity Prescription

HOW MUCH?

Aim for *at least*

- 2–4 repetitions of each exercise targeting the major muscles,
- 10 minutes per session,
- 2–3 times per week.

HOW HARD?

- Stretch only to the point of mild discomfort or tightness (but not pain).
- Build up to holding each stretch for 30 seconds.

What flexibility physical activities would you like to do?

Make stretching a regular part of your warm-up and cool-down every time you exercise.



When you begin a new activity, start at your own comfort level.

As you become used to doing the activity, you can slowly increase:

- **how long** you are active,
- **how often** you are active,
- **how many** activities you do,
- **how hard** you work.

Physical activity and managing your weight

The food you eat and your eating habits are very important to weight management. However, physical activity can also help!

Physical activity helps you to:

- use more energy (burn more calories),
- lower stress and improve how well you sleep,
- improve how your heart works, and
- increase your overall strength.

There are three steps to managing your weight:

- 1) stopping weight gain,
- 2) losing weight, and
- 3) maintaining weight loss.

Walking is a great physical activity, as it is free of charge and it can be done anywhere.



1) Stopping weight gain

Before you can lose weight, your first step should be to focus on stopping *further weight gain*.

It is important to find out why you have gained weight. Talk to your health care provider about this.

Changing your diet and being more physically active can help you to stop gaining weight.



Myth: If I am more physically active, I can eat what I want.

Fact: It takes a lot of physical activity to “burn off” what we eat. For example, it takes about:

- 1 hour of walking to “burn off” a can of pop.
- 7 hours of walking to “burn off” a typical fast food meal (a burger, fries and a pop).

2) Losing weight

An achievable weight loss goal is an important first step. Although sustained weight loss of as little as 3–5% of body weight may lead to reductions in some cardiovascular risk factors, larger weight losses produce greater benefits. Experts suggest an initial goal the loss of 5–10% of the starting weight within 6 months.

Physical activity helps you to:

- keep your energy levels high,
- use more calories, and
- build your strength.

Talk to your healthcare professional about setting a healthy weight loss goal.

People living with obesity benefit from comprehensive approaches including: behaviour modification techniques, cognitive behavioural therapy, activity enhancement, and dietary counseling. Evidence shows that weight loss programs should involve a health team from many professions to treat a person’s obesity.



Did you know that physical activity by itself does not always lead to weight loss?

Long-term weight management requires comprehensive approaches to lifestyle change: diet, physical activity, and behavioral changes.

Make sure healthy food and healthy eating habits are part of your weight loss plan. Talk to a dietitian to learn about any changes you could make.

3) Staying at your new weight after weight loss

To avoid regaining the weight you lost, stay active!

- Find activities you enjoy and can easily do.
- Get your family and friends involved. Being physically active with others can help keep you motivated.
- Be active at times and places that work for you and that fit easily into your life.
- Continue to make physical activity and healthy food choices a part of your life.



Fact: People who remain physically active on a regular basis after they lose weight are more likely to stay at their new body weight.

*Find activities you enjoy
and can easily do.*



Remember:

- Regular physical activity can help you reach and keep a healthy body weight.
- You will see many other benefits from being more active.
- Keep it fun! Having a regularly physically active lifestyle is more important than weight loss. Make fun physical activity a lasting part of your life.

What is one thing you can do *today* to start being more active?

Get your family and friends involved. Being physically active with others can help keep you motivated.



- Topics in this toolkit:
- A. Taking the first step: deciding to be physically active
 - B. Making a physical activity plan
 - C. Setting goals for physical activity
 - D. What stops you from being physically active?
 - E. Benefits of physical activity
 - F. Physical activity and your blood pressure
 - G. High blood pressure safety
 - H. Physical activity and Type 2 diabetes
 - I. Diabetes safety
 - J. Healthy weight and physical activity
 - K. Physical activity and anxiety
 - L. Anxiety safety
 - M. Physical activity and chronic heart failure
 - N. Chronic heart failure safety
 - O. Physical activity and stroke
 - P. Stroke safety
 - Q. Physical activity and Parkinson's Disease
 - R. Parkinson's Disease safety
 - S. Physical activity and dementia
 - T. Dementia safety

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