



How much should I be doing?

Physical Activity Guidelines

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has released the 2009 activity guidelines for middle and older adults. What are these when they are at home?

Well, it's a summary of how much and what type of activity the older adults in the community need to be doing to be healthy. What's more, it's based on actual scientific research where they read all the journal articles from 1999 til 2009 (thank god someone has done all that reading!) and do a summary of what we call evidence based practice. That just means we prescribe exercise based on cold hard scientific fact, not just what we think does a good job.

So what did they say?

Well the position stand recommends that all middle and older adults participate in regular physical activity, avoid an inactive lifestyle and that exercise prescription should include aerobic, muscle strengthening, and flexibility exercises. They aren't that different from the 2008 guidelines, but they have found much more evidence for resistance training.

So they recommend we do:

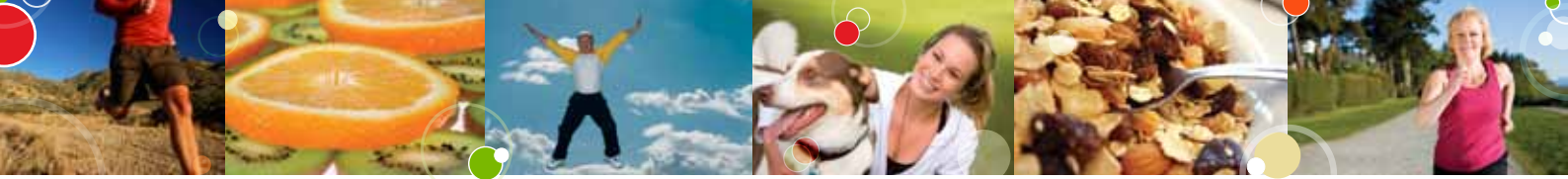
- 30 minutes most days of the week of moderate aerobic exercise or 20 minutes most days of the week of vigorous exercise, as well as
- Resistance training or weight lifting exercise 2-3 times per week (6-8 large muscle group).

So what will doing all this do for you?
Here's a summary of the benefits:

1. 3 months or more of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise are associated with:
 - Cardiovascular improvements in fitness;
 - Reduction in total body fat;
 - Improved blood glucose control and clearance of lipids, as well as preferential utilisation of fat during sub-maximal exercise (that's where the phrase "fat burning" comes from) and
 - Counteract age-related decreases in bone mineral density. (Awesome!)
2. Moderate to high intensity resistance training will:
 - Markedly increase strength and muscular power. Younger and older participants have the same increases in muscle quality (think trim steak vs budget chop)
 - Improve walking, chair stand, and balance activities
 - Maintain or improve bone mineral density
 - Be effective for treating clinical depression (High-intensity only)

And what's more, regular exercise and physical activity are linked to significant improvements in overall psychological well-being.

How much should I be doing?



Earlier this year ACSM also looked at how much exercise the general population needs to do to lose weight. Here's what they found:

1. They prove that you don't need to look like a twig to be healthy. They encourage a 10% reduction in weight, although considerable literature indicates reduction in health risk with 3% to 5% reduction in weight.
2. Moderate-intensity physical activity between 150 and 250 minutes per week to be effective to prevent weight gain – that's between 20 and 35 minutes per day
3. Moderate-intensity physical activity between 150 and 250 minutes per week will provide only modest weight loss, but if you add moderate dietary restrictions weight loss will improve. They also say that severe dietary restriction is not helpful in terms of weight loss (which is great news!)
4. Greater amounts of physical activity over 250 minutes per week, which is over 35 minutes per day, have been associated with clinically significant weight loss. Studies indicate that after weight loss, weight maintenance is improved with physical activity over 250 minutes per week.

Simple ways to introduce physical activity

We often make exercise into a big deal. We make it hard, complicated and just too much effort. Here are some ways to keep it simple if exercise is not really your thing:

1. Take a 10 minute walk to get your lunch
2. Make it a walking business meeting
3. Take the stairs instead of the escalator or lift
4. Walk to the corner shop rather than driving
5. Go and talk to a work colleague rather than sending them an email
6. Walk to your destination when in heavy traffic rather than sitting in a taxi
7. Take your family for a walk
8. Turn on the music and clean the house
9. Don't spend 15 minutes trying to find a parking space close to where you need to go. Park a little bit away and just walk the extra distance.
10. If catching the bus get off a couple of stops earlier and walk the extra distance.

Source: American College of Sports Medicine Position Stand. Appropriate physical activity intervention strategies for weight loss and prevention of weight regain for adults. Donnelly JE, Blair SN, Jakicic JM, Manore MM, Rankin JW, Smith BK; American College of Sports Medicine. Med Sci Sports Exerc. 2009 Feb;41(2):459-71.

Important note: The information provided here is provided for informational purposes only, it should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice or to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Consult your healthcare provider with any questions you may have about your condition or physical or mental ability to participate in exercise, nutrition or any 'tips', 'suggestions' or otherwise found here. © The Glucose Club www.theglucoseclub.com.au. Asteron takes no responsibility and is not liable in any way for this information.