

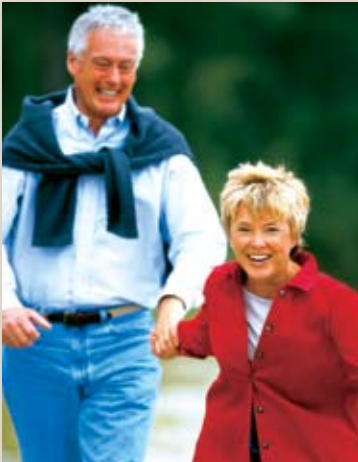


Older Adults and Physical Activity

Why is physical activity important for the older adult population?

Millions of older adults suffer from chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, and high blood pressure that can be prevented or improved through regular physical activity. Regular physical activity has beneficial effects on most (if not all) organ systems, and consequently prevents a broad range of health problems and diseases. Beneficial effects due to physical activity that are supported by scientific evidence include:

- Lower overall mortality
- Lower risk of coronary heart disease
- Lower risk of diabetes
- Lower risk of developing high blood pressure
- Lower risk of obesity
- Improved mood and relief of depressive symptoms
- Improved quality of life and improved functioning
- Lower risk of falls and injury





How can practitioners encourage patients to engage in physical activity?

1. **ASK** patients about their physical activity status.
 - Are you currently physically active?
 - Do you know physical activity is important?
 - Do you have a consistent physical activity routine?
2. **ADVISE** patients on the general benefits of physical activity.
 - Address specific benefits patients may gain, relevant to the chronic disease condition(s) they have, by beginning a physical activity program.
3. **ASSESS** the willingness of patients to begin an exercise program within the next 30 days.
4. **ASSIST** patients by suggesting that they begin a program.
 - Provide physical activity program suggestions.
 - Offer options as to where patients can begin a program.
 - Ask if their health plan offers a physical activity program.
5. **ARRANGE** to follow up with your patients at their next visit.
 - Periodically assess patients' physical activity status. If he or she is adhering to a program, advise the patient to continue, to encourage maintenance. If the patient is not participating, encourage participation and highlight adverse affects of being inactive.



What type of physical activity is recommended for older adults?

- At least **30 minutes** of moderate activity, such as brisk walking, on five or more days of the week
- Brief episodes of physical **activity**, such as ten minutes at a time, if repeated
- For sedentary persons, a gradual **increase** in the duration or intensity of activity
- Activities aimed at building or maintaining muscle strength and balance. Programs to build muscle strength, improve balance, and promote walking **significantly** reduce falls in older persons (Gillespie, Gillespie, Robinson et al., 2002).
- Strength training at least twice a week to improve and **maintain** muscular strength and endurance
- Physical activities that enhance and maintain **flexibility**
- **Moderate** amounts of low-impact activities such as swimming, water exercises, or stretching for those who have difficulty with their mobility
- Gentle forms of yoga and tai chi to promote flexibility, **improve** balance, and increase strength



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