



INTRODUCING THE NATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

Physical activity has a wide range of health benefits for Australians. As well as contributing to obesity prevention, health benefits include the prevention and control of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and some cancers. Yet almost 50 per cent of all Australians are not sufficiently physically active to produce health benefits. The National Physical Activity Guidelines, launched in May 1999, show Australians that physical activity can be a regular part of their lifestyle and need not be strenuous or take up a lot of time.

National Physical Activity Guidelines

The Guidelines indicate the minimum level of physical activity required for good health.

The Guidelines have been published by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and for best results should be combined with healthy eating. To gain short and longer-term benefits, the physical activity Guidelines recommend that you:

1. Think of movement as an opportunity, not an inconvenience;
2. Be active every day in as many ways as you can;
3. Put together at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, but preferably all days; and
4. If you can, also enjoy some regular vigorous exercise for extra health and fitness.

1. Think of movement as an opportunity, not an inconvenience

It can be difficult to be physically active due to increasing work and family commitments. However the Guidelines encourage people to look for opportunities to be active during their daily lives so that physical activity need not be a time-wasting inconvenience.

2. Be active every day in as many ways as you can

There are plenty of opportunities to be more physically active in our everyday lives, such as:

- walking or cycling instead of using the car;
- doing some gardening;
- getting out of the office at lunchtime for a brisk walk;
- walking up stairs instead of using the lift; and
- doing things by hand instead of using labour-saving machines.

3. Put together at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, but preferably all days

Moderate-intensity physical activity causes a slight increase in breathing and heart rate. An example is brisk walking at a pace where you are breathing heavier, but still able to talk easily.

These 30 minutes of activity need not be continuous. Benefits can be achieved through one or a combination of activities throughout the day. For example, a walk to the bus stop in the morning for 10 minutes, followed by a 10 minute walk around the block at lunchtime and then another 10 minute walk in the afternoon, easily makes up the 30 minutes without disrupting regular daily activities.

4. If you can, also enjoy some regular vigorous exercise for extra health and fitness

The Guidelines indicate that greater health benefits can be achieved through regular, vigorous activity in addition to the 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most days. These include overall health and fitness benefits, weight loss and extra protection against heart disease.

Vigorous activity makes you 'huff and puff' and can include active sports such as football, squash, netball and activities such as aerobics, circuit training and jogging.

For more information about Physical Activity and Health and to obtain a copy of the National Physical Activity Guidelines, please visit the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing's Nutrition and Physical Activity website at: <http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/active/index.htm>

For more information about Walk to Work Day, please visit the Walk to Work Day website at: www.walk.com.au

