



Physical Activity—

# Making Healthy Choices



Being physically active every day is important for your health and is also easy to incorporate into your busy schedule. Being active is not just about going to the gym, it is also walking on your lunch break, playing with your kids, dancing around the house, and everything in between. Being active is supposed to be fun and make you feel good too!

## WHY IS IT GOOD TO BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE?

- Makes you look and feel great.
- Gives you more energy.
- Lowers stress and helps you relax.
- Helps you get to and keep a healthy body weight.
- Lowers your risk of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and certain types of cancer.
- Helps build and keep healthy bones, muscles, and joints.

## HOW OFTEN SHOULD I BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE?

- To take care of your health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases, you need at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every day.
- To keep your weight under control, you need 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity on most days of the week.
- If you lost weight and want to keep it off, you need 60 to 90 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every day.

## WHAT IS MODERATE-INTENSITY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

It gets you up and moving and makes your heart beat faster. Brisk walking, biking, taking the stairs, dancing, and raking leaves are examples of moderate-intensity physical activity.

## WHAT IS VIGOROUS-INTENSITY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

It makes you breathe hard and sweat. Running, jogging, playing soccer, fast dancing, and fast biking are examples of vigorous-intensity physical activity.

## Physical Activity—

# Making Healthy Choices (continued)

### HOW CAN I BE MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE EVERY DAY WHEN MY LIFE IS SO BUSY?

Divide your daily routine into a few 10- to 15-minute physical activity breaks. Slowly increase the time as you become more active. There are many fun ways to get physical activity throughout your day. Here are a few ways to get started:

#### BEFORE WORK

- Take your dog out for an early morning walk.
- Get on and off the bus a couple of blocks away from your work.
- Ride your bike or walk to work.
- Park your car farther away from work and then walk.

#### AT WORK

- Walk with a co-worker during breaks or lunchtime.
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Walk to the farthest water fountain or rest room on another floor.
- Schedule your next meeting as a “walking meeting.”
- Choose a lunch spot that you can walk to.

#### AFTER WORK AND AT HOME

- Walk, bike, or jog with a friend or family member.
- Play with your kids – tag, jump rope, and hide and seek.
- When possible, walk or bike instead of driving to run errands.
- Dance to your favorite music.
- Plant and take care of a fruit and vegetable garden.
- Play Frisbee, toss a softball, or kick around a soccer ball.
- Exercise during the commercial breaks while watching TV.



# Making Healthy Choices (continued)



### IF YOU RARELY DO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Begin with activities at the base of the pyramid

- Walk whenever you can
- Make physical activity a part of your leisure time
- Set realistic goals, and work your way up toward the middle of the pyramid

### IF YOU DO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SOMETIMES

Be more consistent with activities in the middle of the pyramid

- Plan physical activity in your day
- Set weekly and monthly goals
- Partner with a friend or family member to do physical activity together

### IF YOU DO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OFTEN

Choose a mix of aerobic, flexibility, and strengthening activities

- Mix up your routine to keep it fun
- Try new physical activities
- Challenge yourself with new goals

Source: Adapted from *The Activity Pyramid. Pyramids of Health, Park Nicollet HealthSource. 2002.*