

Physical activity

According to the World Health Organisation, physical activity means “**any effort involving the muscle-skeletal system which entails a higher energy consumption than that required during rest**”. This definition therefore includes not only sporting activities but also simple daily activities such as walking, cycling, dancing, playing, gardening and housework.

Physical inactivity is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer. Therefore a regular physical activity is one of the key elements that contributes to good health.

Through regular physical activity the heart becomes stronger and more resistant to fatigue. Aerobic activity increases the oxygen demand from the body and the workload to heart and lungs, thus making blood circulation more efficient. A well-trained heart pumps a higher amount of blood without spending extra energy: 10 heartbeats less per minute mean 5,256,000 beats saved every year.

It is never too late to start moving, no minimum level is required to feel the benefits: a little physical activity is better than nothing. And you feel better as soon as you start being more active.

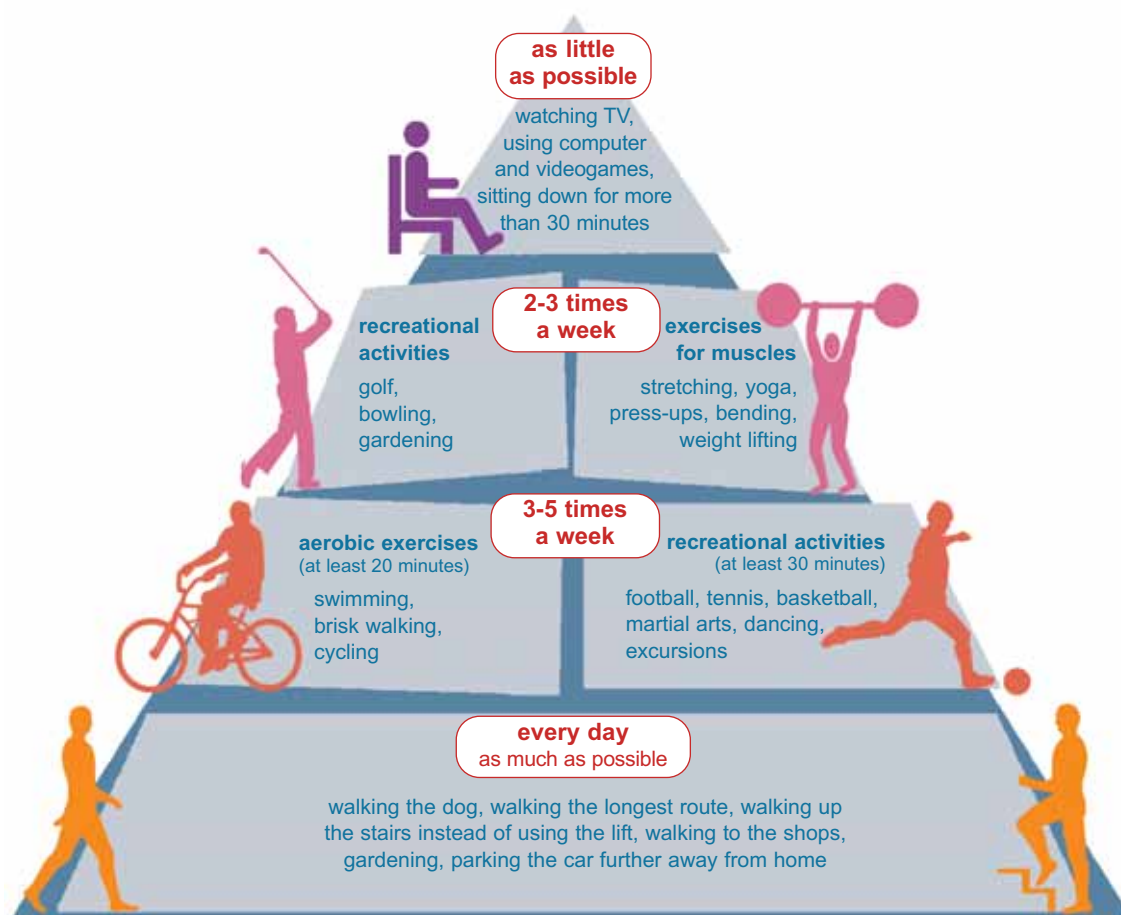
Regular and moderate physical activity:

- ▶ helps lose excess weight
- ▶ improves blood pressure
- ▶ burns fats and improves the cholesterol level in the blood
- ▶ helps prevent and control diabetes
- ▶ is an excellent way to fight stress
- ▶ reduces cravings to smoke
- ▶ is a good way to socialise
- ▶ is the best cosmetic.

How to reach 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day:

- ▶ walking or cycling to work
- ▶ avoiding car for short distances
- ▶ going for a walk with friends or for a run in the park
- ▶ walking up the stairs instead of using the lift
- ▶ getting off the bus one or two stops before yours
- ▶ doing some gardening or housework
- ▶ dancing or playing with kids





Try to increase your physical activity every week. Here is how you can start...

If you are inactive (you rarely do physical activity)

Increase the number of daily activities at the base of the pyramid by:

- ▶ walking up the stairs instead of using the lift
- ▶ hiding the TV remote control and getting up from the armchair every time you change channel
- ▶ walking more: around the house or yard
- ▶ stretching while standing in a queue
- ▶ walking whenever possible.

If you are sporadic (your physical activity is not regular)

Try to become consistent by choosing activities at the middle of the pyramid:

- ▶ find activities you like
- ▶ plan activities during the day
- ▶ set realistic goals.

If you are consistent (you do physical activity at least four times a week)

Choose activities from the whole pyramid and, if you get bored:

- ▶ change your daily routine
- ▶ try out new activities.