

# Taking Steps:

## Exercising to Promote Heart Health

### *Information for Adults*

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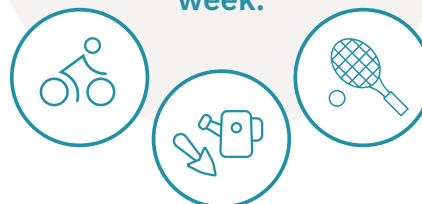
Everyone, regardless of their cardiovascular health, can gain benefits by improving their nutrition and healthy eating behaviors and by increasing physical activity.

Studies show that adults who follow national guidelines for a healthy diet and physical activity have fewer cardiovascular problems and lower death rates than those who do not.

Here are some simple recommendations to get you moving toward improving your cardiovascular health through physical activity. As always, make sure you speak with your health care provider before starting any exercise routine.

PERFORM

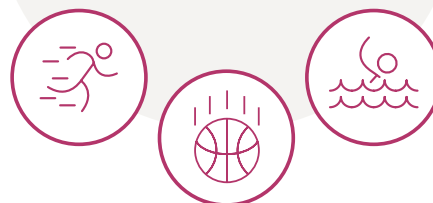
**150 minutes**  
of moderate-intensity  
aerobic physical activity per  
week.



OR

PERFORM

**75 minutes**  
of vigorous-intensity aerobic  
physical activity per week.



**Variation:** Combine moderate and vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity.

**Variation:** Double the minutes for increased health benefits.

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## 1. Engage in Weekly Aerobic Activity

Aerobic exercise consists of brisk activity that increases the circulation of oxygen in the blood and is associated with an increased rate of breathing. Aerobic exercise stimulates and strengthens the heart and lungs. For substantial health benefits of aerobic activity, perform either moderate-intensity or vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity on a weekly basis.

### Moderate and Vigorous Activities

Vigorous activities take more effort than moderate ones. Here are a few examples of moderate and vigorous aerobic physical activities.

Moderate Activities: “I can talk while I do them, but I can’t sing.”

- Biking on level ground or with few hills
- General gardening (e.g., raking, trimming shrubs)
- Sports where you catch and throw (e.g., baseball, softball, volleyball)
- Tennis (doubles)
- Using your manual wheelchair
- Walking briskly



Vigorous Activities: “I can only say a few words without stopping to catch my breath.”

- Aerobic dance
- Biking faster than 10 miles per hour
- Race walking, jogging, or running
- Sports involving running (e.g., basketball, hockey, soccer)
- Swimming laps



Be active *your way* by choosing activities you enjoy!

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## 2. Avoid Inactivity

Some physical activity is better than none — and any amount has health benefits. Even if you cannot achieve the full recommended activity level right now, do what you can. Any physical activity will improve your heart health.

Move often during the day, even if you have only a few minutes. Accumulate as much movement as you can and limit the time you spend sitting. Stairs are free exercise equipment!

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## 3. Strengthen Your Muscles

There are many advantages to increased muscle strength. Strengthening your muscles helps you protect your joints from injury, maintain flexibility and balance, keep a healthy body weight, and lower the risk of osteoporosis (weak or brittle bones).

At a minimum, two days per week, do moderately to very challenging muscle-strengthening activities (e.g., lifting weights or doing pushups) and involve all the major muscle groups in the upper body, lower body, and trunk.



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## For Older Adults

Older adults may be limited to the amount and type of exercise because of other health conditions they already have. Although the recommended amount of exercise is the same throughout adulthood, you may need additional assistance. Talk to your health care provider about your health conditions and how they might affect your ability to do regular physical activity safely. If you cannot do 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week, you should be as physically active as your abilities and conditions allow. You should do exercises that maintain or improve balance. This will decrease your risk for falling. These include side leg raises, back leg raises, and wall pushups. [Here is a site that describes ten exercises for improving your balance.](#)

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## For Adults with Chronic Conditions and Disabilities

Adults with chronic health conditions have the same recommended amount of exercise and strength training as adults without chronic health conditions. If adults are unable to meet these requirements due to their conditions, they should still engage in regular physical activity as they are able, avoid a sedentary lifestyle, and stay in close collaboration with their health care provider to determine an appropriate exercise regimen for their conditions.

For more information, visit Cardi-OH's expanded resource on [exercise for adults with disabilities](#).

### Additional Resources from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Move Your Way  
[health.gov/moveyourway/](https://health.gov/moveyourway/)
- Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (2nd edition)  
[health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/physical-activity-guidelines/current-guidelines](https://health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/physical-activity-guidelines/current-guidelines)

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### Apps for Tracking Fitness

#### **MyFitnessPal** –

[myfitnesspal.com](https://myfitnesspal.com)

Free online calorie counter and diet plan. Helps you lose weight by tracking your calories quickly and easily, and noting where you should make adjustments.



#### **Map My Fitness** –

[mapmyfitness.com](https://mapmyfitness.com)

Free online activity tracker. Helps you track and map your workouts (e.g., walking, running, biking) for pace, distance, and calories; also helps find nearby places to exercise.

*Note: These apps are examples of popular choices for tracking exercise and dietary intake and are presented as suggestions only. Cardi-OH does not endorse the use of any specific app or tracking system.*

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