

FitFacts®

Rating Scale	Intensity
0	Nothing at all
1	Very light
2	Light
3	Fair
4	
5	Moderate
6	
7	Difficult
8	
9	Hard
10	Very Hard

Everything in Moderation

WHEN IT COMES TO EXERCISE, WE EACH DETERMINE WHAT WE CAN OR CANNOT DO, AND HOW HARD WE PUSH OURSELVES. SOME FOLLOW THE ALL-OR-NOTHING PRINCIPLE, BELIEVING THAT IF EXERCISE IS GOING TO BE GOOD FOR YOU IT HAS TO BE HARD, EVEN PAINFUL.

This is a myth and far from the truth. In the 1990s, a shift occurred with exercise recommendations, as experts began to recognize the benefits of “moderate-intensity” activity. So before you go out and break your back trying to get in some hardcore exercise, relax and develop a workout that you might actually stick with and enjoy. After all, if you enjoy an experience—such as exercise—you are more likely to want to repeat it.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUT OUT A LOT TO GAIN A LOT

There are many methods used to measure the intensity of activity and all give some indication of how hard the body is working. While you might want to monitor your metabolic rate, few of us have the means to do so. There are some simple guidelines to follow when it comes to monitoring exercise intensity. Without requiring expensive and advanced testing, a good marker of moderate-intensity activity is the ability to elevate your heart rate and break a sweat while still being able to carry on a conversation, even if it is a bit of a challenge. Next time you are working out, try to talk continuously and out loud for 20 seconds. If it feels challenging, but not difficult, where you are not gasping for air between words, then you are working at an appropriate intensity.

Another way to measure your activity level is to estimate your effort on a scale from 0 to 10, based upon the perception of your effort. Activity levels between 4 and 6 would generally be accepted as moderate-intensity activity.

LIMITLESS OPTIONS

There are few limitations on what types of activities you can do at a moderate intensity. The *Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health* includes a recommendation that everyone accumulate 30 minutes or more of physical activity on most or all days of the week. You can do this in 30 consecutive minutes or break it up

Less Vigorous, More Time

Washing and waxing a car for 45–60 minutes	Raking leaves for 30 minutes
Washing windows or floors for 45–60 minutes	Walking 2 miles in 30 minutes (15 min/mile)
Playing volleyball for 45 minutes	Water aerobics for 30 minutes
Playing touch football for 30–45 minutes	Swimming laps for 20 minutes
Gardening for 30–45 minutes	Wheelchair basketball for 20 minutes
Wheeling self in wheelchair for 30–40 minutes	Basketball (playing a game) for 15–20 minutes
Walking 1.75 miles in 35 minutes (20 min/mile)	Bicycling 4 miles in 15 minutes
Basketball (shooting baskets) for 30 minutes	Jumping rope for 15 minutes
Bicycling 5 miles in 30 minutes	Running 1.5 miles in 15 minutes (10 min/mile)
Dancing fast (social) for 30 minutes	Shoveling snow for 15 minutes
Pushing a stroller 1.5 miles in 30 minutes	Stairwalking for 15 minutes

into 10-minute segments throughout the day. Thirty minutes a day is enough to maintain health and reduce your risk of chronic disease.

If you want to lose weight, or gain additional benefits and further improve your health, you will need to exercise for a longer duration and at a higher intensity. Brisk walking is the most popular choice since it can easily be incorporated into a busy day, generally has low injury rates, doesn't require special skills or equipment and can be done by anyone at any age.

But don't forget the things you do every day. Gardening provides a multitude of opportunities for improving muscle strength, as does waxing the car or vacuuming the carpet. One of the appealing aspects of this type of exercise program is that the amount of exercise you need to accumulate can be adapted according to the duration, intensity or frequency of your exercise.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Now that you know that physical activity does not need to be overly strenuous to be beneficial, it's time to get started. To ensure that you're able to stick with exercise, choose activities that you enjoy and that can easily become part of your routine.

Begin slowly, giving the body time to adjust, and work up to the desired amount and intensity. If you have any chronic health problems, or are at risk for any (e.g., heart disease, diabetes, obesity), consult with your physician before starting any activity.

EXAMPLES OF MODERATE AMOUNTS OF ACTIVITY

A moderate amount of physical activity is roughly equivalent to physical activity that uses approximately 150 Calories (kcal) of energy per day, or 1,000 Calories per week (see table below). Some activities can be performed at various intensities; the suggested durations correspond to expected intensity of effort.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

[*Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health*](#)