



## How Much Do You REALLY Need to Exercise?

**When it comes to fitness, is there a magic number? Find out now.**

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Reviewed by QualityHealth's Medical Advisory Board

We all have the best of intentions when it comes to personal fitness. But when real life gets in the way, some of us wonder where we can cut corners and still be physically fit. How much exercise you need varies depending on your workout goals but The Centers for Disease Control provide these guidelines as the bare minimum:

2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of **moderate-intensity aerobic** (brisk walking) activity per week *and* weight training/muscle-strengthening activities two or more days per week.

OR

1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) of **vigorous-intensity** aerobic activity (running) every week and weight training twice a week (or more).

When you do the math, one minute of vigorous aerobics is equal to two minutes of moderate aerobics.

According to the American College of Cardiology and the American College of Sports Medicine, good health really comes with 30 minutes of activity, at least 3-5 times a week.

Thirty minutes can be hard to find, so try breaking your workouts up throughout your day. Exercising in short spurts is as effective as longer workouts. A study published in *Preventive Medicine* in 2006 says researchers found that multiple workout sessions as short as 6 minutes apiece could help sedentary adults reach fitness goals similar to those achieved by working out for 30 minutes at a time.

Any amount of exercise is better than nothing, and novices will notice the beneficial effects almost immediately. Dramatic effects though (like serious weight loss) require longer and harder workouts. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention says adults should lean towards achieving 5 hours of moderate aerobic activity and 2 days of weight training per week or 2 ½ hours of vigorous aerobics plus weight training if they want to reap greater rewards.

Aerobic activity or "cardio" bumps up your heart and respiratory rates. *Moderate-intensity* means you're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat and includes activities like:

Walking, dancing, lawn-mowing, water aerobics and bike riding on level surface.

*Vigorous-intensity* means your heartbeat is pounding and you can't carry on much of a conversation. Activities include:

Jogging, running, lap swimming, fast or uphill bike riding, vigorous tennis and other fast-paced sports.

Muscle strengthening/weight training activities should work all the major muscle groups including legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms. There's more than one way to get this job done: Lifting weights (either weight machines or free weights), using resistance bands, resistance exercises like push ups or sit ups, heavy gardening and yoga.

Adults with disabilities or women who are pregnant should consult with their physician about modifications to make exercise safe but exercise does every body good.

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