

Physical Activity Recommendations for Every Age Group

Compiled by the California Center for Physical Activity

Age Range	Appropriate Weekly Activity Goal
Preschool (3-5)	2 miles or more
Children (5-12)	5 miles
Youth (13-17)	5 miles
Adults (18-59)	5-10 miles
Older Adults (60+)	2-7 miles

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: appropriate Shape Up weekly goal is 2 miles

All preschool children should participate every day in a form of physical activity appropriate for their developmental level and physical health status. This should occur in the context of home, preschool, day care or other care giving settings.

Free play designed to provide opportunities for each child to develop fundamental motor skills and to reach his or her potential at his or her own rate is preferable to structured sessions. As much free play as possible should take place in a safe outdoor environment.

In structured sports programs, participation and enjoyment should be emphasized rather than competition and victory. Emphasis should be placed on the promotion of physical activity as a natural and lifelong activity of healthy living. Setting, format, rules, and equipment should be modified accordingly.

CHILDREN (5-12 years): appropriate Shape Up weekly goal is 5 miles

Elementary school children should accumulate at least 30-60 minutes of age and developmentally appropriate physical activity on all, or most days of the week.

An accumulation of more than 60 minutes, and up to several hours per day, of age and developmentally appropriate activities is encouraged for elementary school children. Given that children have demonstrated patterns of intermittent activity, accumulation of physical activity over the day seems a practical approach.

Some of the child's activity each day should be in periods lasting 10-15 minutes or more that includes moderate to vigorous activity. Intermittent activity involves alternating bouts of moderate to vigorous activity with periods of rest and recovery.

YOUTH (13-17 years): appropriate Shape Up weekly goal is 5 miles

All adolescents should be physically active daily, or nearly every day, as part of play, games, sports, work, transportation, recreation, physical education, or planned exercise, in the context of family, school, and community activities.

Adolescents should engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day on most days of the week. Thirty minutes of physical activity per day should be viewed as a minimum. One hour per day represents a more favorable level.

Physical activity can be performed in a continuous fashion or intermittently throughout the day.

ADULTS (18-59 years): appropriate Shape Up weekly goal is 5-10 miles

General Health Benefits:

All adults should accumulate a minimum of 30 minutes of at least moderate intensity physical activity on most, if not all, days of the week. Intermittent moderate to vigorous activities during the day should last from 8-10 minutes, although shorter bouts may be needed when first starting a physical activity program. Integrating physical activity into one's daily lifestyle and routine is an effective way to accumulate physical activity over the day.

Cardiorespiratory Fitness, Body Composition, and Additional Health Benefits:

Adults should engage in moderate intensity endurance activity for 20-60 minutes, 3-5 days per week. Endurance activity is any activity that uses large muscle groups, which can be maintained continuously, and is rhythmical and aerobic in nature. Examples include walking-hiking, running-jogging, cycling-bicycling, cross-country skiing, aerobic dance/group exercise, rope skipping, rowing, stair climbing, swimming, skating, and various endurance game activities or some combination thereof.

Duration is dependent on the intensity of the activity; thus, lower-intensity activity should be conducted over a longer period of time (30 minutes or more), and, conversely, higher-intensity activity should be done over a shorter period of time (20-30 minutes).

Muscular Strength, Muscular Endurance, Skeletal, and Flexibility Benefits:

One set of 8-10 resistance training exercises that condition the major muscle groups should be performed 2-3 days per week. Flexibility exercises that stretch the major muscle groups should be performed a minimum of 2-3 days per week

OLDER ADULTS (> 60 years): appropriate Shape Up weekly goal is 2-7 miles per week

All older adults should meet the guidelines listed above for adults in addition to the recommendations below.

Balance, agility, mobility, coordination, and reaction time exercises should be performed by persons experiencing a diminished capacity in these areas of function.

Physical activity level should be increased more gradually in older adults to decrease the risk for soreness, discomfort, and injury. Older adults with existing medical conditions or those who are unsure about their safety during physical activity should first consult their physician before embarking on a physical activity program.