

**Q.** How much do I need to exercise?

**A.** Be active at least 30 minutes a day. Probably more than you're exercising right now. It might be hard to hear, but it's true.

More than 80 percent of all adults in the U.S. don't get enough exercise.<sup>1</sup> About 36 percent of adults don't get any exercise. And that's a problem.

If you don't exercise, your muscles, bones, and heart get weaker over time. Lack of exercise can lead to weight gain, too. But the long-term effect of poor exercise habits is a lot more serious than clothes that don't fit.

Research shows that people who don't exercise regularly have a higher risk for:<sup>2</sup>

- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Early death
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Obesity
- Poor bone health
- Alzheimer's disease

In one recent study, researchers looked at the exercise habits of about 15,000 adults during a 12-year period.<sup>3</sup> They found that the most active people were 42 percent less likely to die early than inactive people. Even being moderately active, beginning at any age, will help you live longer.

### Make Time for Exercise to Live Longer

So how much exercise do you need? Aim for 30 minutes of exercise a day.



Take an honest look at your exercise habits. How many minutes a day/week do you exercise? If you get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day, keep it up. If you don't, there's room for improvement.

Regular exercise makes the heart, arteries, bones, and muscles stronger. It helps your body turn food into energy faster. And it leads to good health.

Here's what the American College of Sports Medicine recommends:

- **30 minutes of moderate exercise** (like brisk walking or cycling) on five or more days a week. If you're short on time, aim for 20 to 30 minutes of vigorous exercise (like jogging or running) three times a week.
- **Muscle-strengthening exercises** (e.g., squats, push-ups, curl-ups, pull-ups, etc.) on at least two days a week.
- **Stretching exercises** at least 2-3 times weekly, for people age 55 and older (stretching and balance exercises for seniors).

### 4 Ways to Be More Active

The first rule of fitness, if you're out of shape: Don't overdo it. If you overwork your muscles, they can get sore or injured. It hurts – and you probably won't want to continue regular activity. Start at

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an easy level and gradually increase your level of exercise over time.

Here are some other ways to help you be more active:<sup>4</sup>

1. **Choose activities you enjoy** doing (e.g., walk, bike, jog, swim, pickle ball, tennis or other active sports).
2. **Get a friend or family member to join you.** Social support is very helpful to stick to an exercise schedule.
3. **Set goals,** keep daily records, track your progress, and reward yourself for reaching your goals.
4. **Use a fitness tracking device,** mobile app, or pedometer. It's a proven way to help you reach your fitness goals and stay motivated.

Make time for exercise. You'll feel better, be healthier, and live longer.

### References

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