

Position Statement

The Need for Daily Physical Activity

This Position Statement was developed as an educational tool based on the opinion of the authors. It is not a product of a systematic review. Readers are encouraged to consider the information presented and reach their own conclusions.

Medical research has proven that people can substantially improve their health and quality of life with moderate physical activity. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 out of 4 American adults report that they don't engage in any physical activity in their leisure time and, of those surveyed, almost half are unable to engage in the recommended amount of activity (30 minutes per day).

Barriers to exercise participation may include dislike of vigorous activity, lack of time, or fear that exercise will aggravate a medical or musculoskeletal condition.

Researchers have found that moderate physical activity of at least 30 minutes a day provides significant health benefits. Even people with chronic conditions such as osteoarthritis and osteoporosis can improve their health and quality of life with regular, moderate amounts of physical activity.

Regular physical activity slows the loss of muscle mass, strengthens bones and reduces joint and muscle pain. Physical activity also improves mobility, balance and sleep. These factors all reduce the risk of falling, which could prevent a serious injury such as a hip fracture.

Physical activity is safe and beneficial for people with chronic conditions like arthritis, high blood pressure, or osteoporosis. In fact, lack of activity can make these conditions worse or, at least, make them difficult to live with. If you have medical or orthopaedic conditions, or if you are out of shape and haven't exercised in a while, check with your physician before starting any exercise program.

Exercise need not be strenuous or stressful. While some people enjoy participating in a regularly-scheduled exercise class, others can achieve **healthful benefits** from daily activities such as brisk walking, bicycle riding, swimming, dancing, housework and gardening.

Adults are encouraged to do different physical activities on different days, and even in short intervals of 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in the afternoon. The healthful benefits of physical activity are cumulative. However, the benefits diminish quickly when physical activity ceases.

To improve balance and prevent falls, participate in an exercise program for agility, strength, balance and coordination such as tai chi, yoga or other weight-bearing exercises.

Weight-Bearing Exercises to Build Strong Bones include:

- Brisk walking, jogging, or hiking.
- Yard work such as pushing a lawnmower or moderate gardening.
- Team sports, such as soccer, baseball, or basketball.
- Dancing, step aerobics, yoga or stair climbing.
- Tennis or other racquet sports.
- Skiing, skating, karate, or bowling.
- Weight training with free weights or machines.

Exercise safely by following these tips:

- **Use Proper Equipment.** Replace your athletic shoes as they wear out. Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes that let you move freely and are light enough to release body heat. When exercising in cold weather, dress in removable layers.
- **Warm Up.** Warm up to prepare to exercise, even before stretching. Run or march in place for a few minutes, breathe slowly and deeply, or gently rehearse the motions of the exercise to follow. Warming up increases your heart and blood flow rates and loosens up other muscles, tendons, ligaments, and joints.
- **Stretch.** Warm up before stretching. Begin stretches slowly and carefully until reaching a point of muscle tension. Hold each stretch for 10 to 20 seconds, then slowly and carefully release it. Inhale before each stretch and exhale as you release. Do each stretch several times. Never stretch to the point of pain, and always maintain control.
- **Take Your Time.** When lifting weights, slowly move through the full range of motion with each repetition in a controlled fashion. Breathe regularly to help prevent spikes in blood pressure.
- **Drink Water.** Drink enough water to prevent dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Drink 16 ounces of water 15 minutes before you start exercising and another 16 ounces after you cool down. Have a drink of water every 20 minutes or so while you exercise.
- **Cool Down.** Make cooling down the final phase of your exercise routine. Slow your motions and lessen the intensity of your movements for a few minutes before you stop completely.
- **Rest.** Schedule regular days off from exercise and rest when tired. This will help prevent overtraining and many overuse injuries. Fatigue, soreness, and pain are good reasons to not exercise.
- **Get It Checked.** If you have medical or orthopaedic conditions, or if you are out of shape and haven't exercised in a while, check with your physician before starting any exercise program.

References:

1. Your Orthopaedic Connection, retrieved August 27, 2008. www.orthoinfo.org.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, retrieved August 27, 2008. <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/>
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, retrieved May 10, 2013. <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/>

©February 1997 American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons®. Revised December 2008 and June 2014.

This material may not be modified without the express written permission of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

Position Statement 1138

For additional information, contact the Public Relations Department at 847-384-4036.