

How do you measure up



Some useful facts and tips: healthy eating and physical activity

Your lifestyle can have a major impact on your health and wellbeing. Regular physical activity and healthy eating helps to maintain good health, prevent obesity, and can also help protect you against chronic disease, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

How can I be more active?

Being more active is all about making small changes in your life, ones that you can live with. As you get used to them, gradually add more changes and activities.

Australian guidelines suggest that adults should try to include a minimum 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity into your day. Moderate-intensity activity will cause a slight, but noticeable increase in your breathing and heart rate. A good example of moderate-intensity activity is brisk walking.

You don't have to do it all at once – you can accumulate your 30 minutes or more of moderate-intensity activity by combining a few shorter sessions of about 10 to 15 minutes each throughout the day. Research has shown that accumulated short bouts of moderate-intensity activity are just as effective at improving health factors such as blood pressure and blood cholesterol.

Physical activity guidelines for adults:

There are four steps for better health for Australian adults:

Step 1: Think of movement as an opportunity, not an inconvenience.

Step 2: Be active every day in as many ways as you can.

Step 3: Put together at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days.

Step 4: If you can, also enjoy some regular, vigorous activity for extra health and fitness.

Australian Better Health Initiative

A joint Australian, State and Territory government initiative.

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Moderate-intensity physical activity will cause a slight, but noticeable increase in your breathing and heart rate and should be carried out for at least 10 minutes. Examples include brisk walking, bike riding, or kicking a ball with your kids.

Vigorous activity is where you “huff and puff”; where talking in full sentences between breaths is difficult. Vigorous activity can come from such sports as football, squash, netball, basketball and activities such as aerobics, speed walking, jogging, and fast cycling. **Note:** If you are pregnant, have been previously inactive, or suffer from any medical conditions it is recommended that you seek medical advice before commencing vigorous physical activity.

Life can be extremely hectic, and it is easy to think that there just isn't enough time to be physically active, however, like most things; you just need to plan and prioritise.

Tips for getting started

- Set a date for when you will start. Write the date down and stick to it.
- Set short-term and long-term goals.
- Choose activities that are right for you and make sure it's something you enjoy, or go for something different you've always wanted to try.
- Think about what activities you will do such as, walking, jogging, joining a team sport, taking a group fitness class, dancing, and swimming and then make an activity planner to plan the times and days you will do each activity.
- Ask a friend to be active with you and help motivate you. You are more likely to keep active if it is fun and you have people to enjoy it with.
- Do not give up exercise before you start to see the benefits. Be patient and keep at it.

Tips to keep going

- Buy yourself a pedometer – a gadget, which when worn on your hip counts how many steps you take. Use this to motivate you to keep increasing your daily steps (see www.10000steps.org.au for more information).
- Avoid short trips in the car and walk or cycle instead, or get off the bus/train/tram one stop early.
- Try a new sport/activity (e.g. dance classes) or go back to one you have played before.
- Play actively with your children—kick a ball around, skip, jump on the trampoline, or go for a bushwalk.
- Keep a pair of walking or running shoes in the car or at the office and you will always be ready for a walk or run.
- Start a walking group with work colleagues/friends and stick to a routine of certain days or times to go out together.
- Take the stairs rather than the lift, or walk rather than rest on escalators.
- Go for a short walk during your lunch break.

What should I be eating?

As well as being physically active, healthy eating is recommended to help reduce your risk of chronic disease.

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods including:

- Plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits.
- Plenty of cereals including breads, rice, pasta and noodles (preferably wholegrain).
- Lean meat, fish, poultry, and/or alternatives such as eggs, liver and kidney, legumes, and nuts.
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese, and/or dairy alternatives such as fortified soy milk and soy based products. Reduced-fat varieties should be chosen where possible.

Tips for healthy eating

Things to do:

- Enjoy a variety of healthy foods every day.
- Eat more fruit and vegetables (at least 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables every day).
- Keep a record of your daily food intake for a week or so to see if your eating habits have changed.
- Eat regular meals – and don't forget breakfast. If you skip meals, you'll be more likely to eat high fat, high sugar food when you're hungry. Planning meals ahead can help.
- Eat more fibre by including high fibre foods such as oats, bran, legumes, vegetables and fruit in your meals and snacks.
- Drink plenty of water.

Things to limit:

- Consider your portion sizes.
- Eat less processed food.
- Limit your alcohol intake if you choose to drink. Alcohol is energy dense and can contribute to weight gain.
- Eat only moderate amounts of sugars and goods containing added sugars.
- Choose food low in salt.
- Limit your intake of 'sometimes foods' such as unhealthy snacks and take-away foods.

Tips for grocery shopping

- Prepare a shopping list and stick to it. Avoid doing grocery shopping when you are hungry.
- Choose lean meats and trim the fat off meat. Try to limit processed meats (e.g. sausages or delicatessen meats such as bacon or salami) as they tend to be high in salt and saturated fat.
- Try to limit foods that contain a lot of energy, such as cakes, biscuits, chocolate and high-fat snack foods.
- Buy low fat and unsweetened foods, but choose carefully — some foods advertised as "lite" or "fat free" may still be high in kilojoules.
- Buy polyunsaturated or monounsaturated oils like sunflower oil and olive oil for cooking rather than saturated fats like butter or ghee.
- Leave juice and sweetened drinks like cordial or soft drink off your shopping list and drink water instead.

For more information visit australia.gov.au/MeasureUp