



Maryland State Advisory Council on Physical Fitness

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
www.MarylandFitness.org

Older Adult Physical Activity Recommendations

The Maryland State Advisory Council on Physical Fitness recommends that all adults **age 50 and older**, regardless of ability, participate in moderate physical activity every day. The benefits of moderate physical activity for midlife and older persons include:

- Decreased risk and severity of chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and certain forms of cancer
- Lowered blood pressure and cholesterol levels in some people
- Improved body composition (increased muscle and decreased fat)
- Healthier bones, joints and muscles
- Improved mood and feelings of well-being; reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Enhanced overall physical functional that extend years of active independent life
- Greater attention span and cognition
- Reduced risk of falls

The Council recommends that all adults age 50 and older set a long-term goal to accumulate at least 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity every day of the week. Previously sedentary older adults should start with short intervals of moderate physical activity (5–10 minutes) and gradually build up to 30 minutes or more of activity. Moderate endurance-related activities include:

- Walking briskly (e.g. parking farther away from your destination, mall walking, using stairs)
- Dancing (e.g. ballroom, cha cha, swing)
- Biking (e.g. biking the trails in your local county or state parks)
- Swimming (e.g. using pools at the YMCA, local college, fitness and/or community center)
- Gardening and active housework (e.g. washing floors or windows)

People who currently meet these recommended minimal standards may derive additional health and fitness benefits from becoming physically active for longer periods of time, or including more vigorous activity.

For a complete fitness program, all older adults should also include resistance training of the major muscle groups, 2–3 days per week to enhance muscular strength and endurance and improve the ability to perform the routine tasks of daily life. Older adults should complete 2-3 sets of 8-12 repetitions of each resistance training exercise. In addition, stretching exercises should be performed a minimum of 2 days per week to maintain, or improve flexibility. Balance and coordination can be maintained and/or improved by performing daily activities that challenge those systems.