

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

2011 SCIENTIFIC STATEMENTS

FOR OLDER ADULTS - 65 YEARS & OLDER

Preamble

These guidelines are relevant to all apparently healthy adults aged 65 years and older, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity or socio-economic status. Older adults are encouraged to participate in a variety of physical activities that are enjoyable and safe.

Older adults can meet these guidelines through planned exercise sessions, transportation, recreation, sports or occupational demands in the context of family, work, volunteer and community activities. This should be achieved above and beyond the incidental physical activities accumulated in the course of daily living.

Following these guidelines can reduce the risk of chronic disease and premature death, maintain functional independence and mobility, as well as improve fitness, body composition, bone health, cognitive function and indicators of mental health. The potential benefits far exceed the potential risks associated with physical activity.

These guidelines may be appropriate for older adults with frailty, a disability or medical condition; however, they should consult a health professional to understand the types and amounts of physical activity appropriate for them based on their exercise capacity and specific health risks or limitations.

For those who are physically inactive, doing amounts below the recommended levels can provide some health benefits. For these adults, it is appropriate to start with smaller amounts of physical activity and gradually increase duration, frequency and intensity as a stepping stone to meeting the guidelines.

Guidelines

- To achieve health benefits and improve functional abilities, adults aged 65 years and older should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.
- It is also beneficial to add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least 2 days per week.
- Those with poor mobility should perform physical activities to enhance balance and prevent falls.
- More physical activity provides greater health benefits.