

Physical Activity for People with Hypertension

What is physical activity?

Physical activity is any movement of the body that requires energy. Physical activity includes exercise as well as other activities which are done as part of playing, recreation, working or getting around.

Why should I engage in physical activity?

There is strong evidence that suggests that regular physical activity done at the right intensity will result in significant health benefits.

Physical activity can help you:

- Better manage your chronic disease
- Live longer
- Maintain your mobility and independence
- Improve your fitness
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Keep your bones healthy
- Maintain your mental health and make you feel better

For people with hypertension

Physical activity in addition to changes in your diet and weight loss can help you better manage your high blood pressure.

Exercise generally decreases both your systolic (the top number) and diastolic (the bottom number) values by five to seven points.

The decrease in blood pressure can occur as early as three to four weeks after increasing your activity level.

How do I engage in physical activity?

To achieve health benefits and improve your function, the **Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines** recommend that:

- Older adults 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.

How do I make sure I am working at the right intensity?

The intensity of a physical activity depends on your previous exercise experience and your level of fitness. **You should be working at a moderate to vigorous intensity to get the greatest health benefit.**

Intensity	Moderate-Intensity	Vigorous-Intensity
What you should feel:	Your heart rate increases a little You are breathing harder (you can talk, but can't sing) You are sweating a little	Your heart rate increases a lot You are "out of breath" (you can't talk or your talking is broken up by large breaths) You are sweating a lot
Examples:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brisk walking• Bike riding• Dancing• Gardening• Housework• Active play with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jogging• Cycling• Cross-country skiing• Aerobics• Heavy shoveling• Competitive sports

How do I include strengthening activities?

Besides aerobic activity, you need to do things to strengthen your muscles at least 2 days a week. These activities should work all the major muscle groups of your body (legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms). Refer to the TIPs sheet on Muscle Strengthening for details.

How do I include activities to improve my balance?

If you would like to know more about a **balance training program** that you can perform at home or about **fall prevention programs** in your community, refer to the TIPs sheet on Balance Training.

Precautions for people with hypertension

- If you take medication for hypertension, monitor your blood pressure before, during and after your activity to see how it affects your blood pressure.
- If your blood pressure is greater than 180/105 mmHg, DO NOT exercise and seek medical attention.