

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND YOUR HEART

## MENU

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# Types



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The three main types of physical activity are aerobic, muscle strengthening, and bone strengthening. Balance and flexibility activities are also beneficial. Aerobic activity is the type that benefits your heart and lungs the most. By understanding the different types of physical activity, [benefits](#), and [recommendations](#), you can create a plan to [add physical activity into your healthy lifestyle](#).

## Aerobic activity

Aerobic activity moves your large muscles, such as those in your arms and legs. Aerobic activity is also called endurance activity.

Aerobic activity makes your heart beat faster than usual. You also breathe harder during this type of activity. Over time, regular aerobic activity makes your heart and lungs stronger and able to work better.

## Intensity levels of aerobic activity

You can do aerobic activity with different levels of intensity, including: [Was this page helpful?](#)

- **Light-intensity activities** are common daily activities that don't require much effort.
- **Moderate-intensity activities** make your heart, lungs, and muscles work harder than light-intensity activities do. On a scale of 0 to 10, moderate-intensity activity is a 5 or 6 and produces noticeable increases in breathing and heart rate. A person doing moderate-intensity activity can talk but not sing.
- **Vigorous-intensity activities** make your heart, lungs, and muscles work hard. On a scale of 0 to 10, vigorous-intensity activity is a 7 or 8. A person doing vigorous-intensity activity can't say more than a few words without stopping for a breath.

Moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activities are better for your heart than light-intensity activities. However, even light-intensity activities are better than no activity at all.

The level of intensity depends on how hard you have to work to do the activity. To do the same activity, people who are less fit usually have to work harder than people who are more fit. So, for example, what is light-intensity activity for one person may be moderate-intensity for another.

## Examples of aerobic activity

Depending on your fitness level, aerobic activity can be light, moderate, or vigorous in intensity:

- Pushing a grocery cart around a store
- Gardening, such as digging or hoeing that causes your heart rate to go up
- Walking, hiking, jogging, running
- Water aerobics or swimming laps
- Bicycling, skateboarding, rollerblading, and jumping rope
- Ballroom dancing and aerobic dancing
- Tennis, soccer, hockey, and basketball

## Muscle-strengthening activity

Muscle-strengthening activities improve the strength, power, and endurance of your muscles. Doing pushups and situps, lifting weights, climbing stairs, and digging in the garden are examples of muscle-strengthening activities.

## Bone-strengthening activity

With bone-strengthening activities, your feet, legs, or arms support your body's weight, and your muscles push against your bones. This helps make your bones strong. Running, walking, jumping rope, and lifting weights are examples of bone-strengthening activities.

Muscle-strengthening and bone-strengthening activities also can be aerobic, depending on whether they make your heart and lungs work harder than usual. For example, running is both an aerobic activity and a bone-strengthening activity.

## Balance activities

These kinds of activities can improve your ability to resist forces that can make you fall, either while stationary or moving. Walking backward, standing on one leg, walking heel-to-toe, practicing standing from a sitting position, or using a wobble board are examples of balance activities. Strengthening muscles of the back, abdomen, and legs also improves balance.

## Flexibility activities

Stretching helps improve your flexibility and your ability to fully move your joints. Touching your toes, doing side stretches, and doing yoga exercises are examples of stretching.

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