

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

In this Unit...You will:

1. Learn the importance of physical fitness
2. Learn how much physical activity you need

Assignment: - Answer the questions, at the end of this handout

Why is physical activity important?

source: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/physical-activity/why.htm>

Regular physical activity can produce long term health benefits. People of all ages, shapes, sizes, and abilities can benefit from being physically active. The more physical activity you do, the greater the health benefits. Being physically active can help you:

- Increase your chances of living longer
- Feel better about yourself
- Decrease your chances of becoming depressed
- Sleep well at night
- Move around more easily
- Have stronger muscles and bones
- Stay at or get to a healthy weight
- Be with friends or meet new people
- Enjoy yourself and have fun

When you are not physically active, you are more likely to:

- Get heart disease
- Get type 2 diabetes
- Have high blood pressure
- Have high blood cholesterol
- Have a stroke

Physical activity and nutrition work together for better health. Being active increases the amount of calories burned. As people age their metabolism slows, so maintaining energy balance requires moving more and eating less.

Some types of physical activity are especially beneficial. Physical activity does not have to be strenuous in order for it to be beneficial:

- Aerobic activities make you breathe harder and make your heart beat faster. Aerobic activities can be moderate or vigorous in their intensity. Vigorous activities take more effort than moderate ones. For moderate activities, you can talk while you do them, but you can't sing. For vigorous activities, you can only say a few words without stopping to catch your breath.
- Muscle-strengthening activities make your muscles stronger. These include activities like pushups and lifting weights. It is important to work all the different parts of the body - your legs, hips, back, chest, stomach, shoulders, and arms.
- Bone-strengthening activities make your bones stronger. Bone strengthening activities, like jumping, are especially important for children and adolescents. These activities produce a force on the bones that promotes bone growth and strength.
- Balance and stretching activities enhance physical stability and flexibility, which reduces risk of injuries. Examples are gentle stretching, dancing, yoga, martial arts, and t'ai chi.

The Physical Activity Pyramid

This is an excerpt from [Fitness for Life, Sixth Edition](#) by Charles Corbin and Guy Le Masurier.

National physical activity guidelines for youth developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) recommend at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. The five steps of the *Physical Activity Pyramid* (figure 5.2) help you understand the five kinds of physical activity, which build different parts of fitness and produce different health and wellness benefits (recall the principle of specificity). To meet the recommended 60 minutes of daily activity, you can choose from the different types of activity. For optimal benefits, you should perform activities from all parts of the pyramid each week. As you can see, activities at or near the bottom of the pyramid may need to be done more frequently or for a longer time than those near the top of the pyramid to get the same volume of activity.

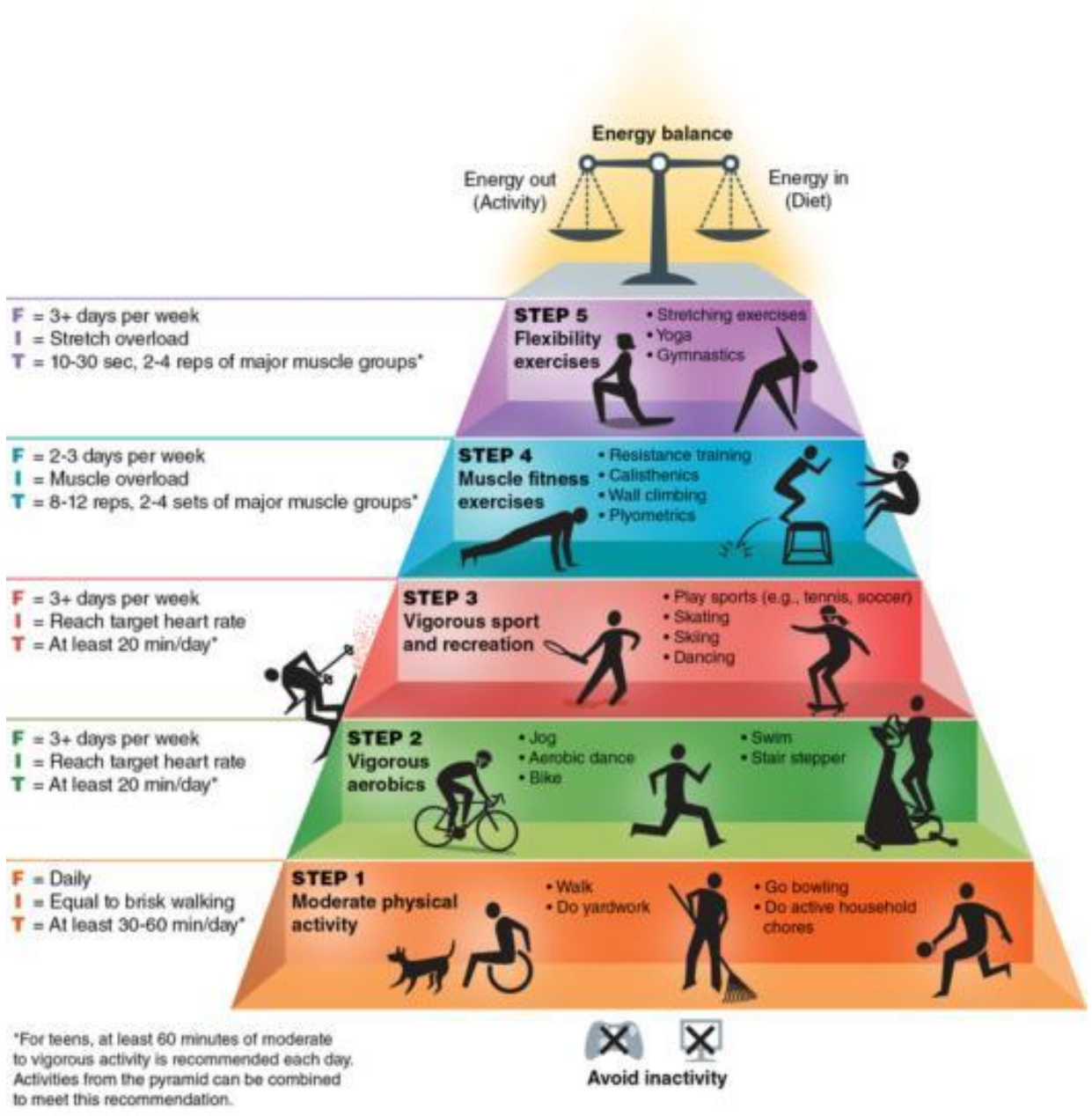


Figure 5.2 The new Physical Activity Pyramid for Teens.
Source: C.B. Corbin

Moderate Physical Activity

Moderate physical activity is the first step in the Physical Activity Pyramid, and it should be performed daily or nearly every day. Moderate activity involves exercise equal in intensity to brisk walking. It includes some activities of normal daily living (also called lifestyle activities), such as yardwork (for example, raking leaves or mowing the lawn) and housework (for example, mopping the floor). It also includes sports that are not vigorous, such as bowling and golf. **Activities can be either moderate or vigorous depending on your effort level**; for example, shooting basketballs is typically a moderate activity, whereas playing a full-court game is vigorous. National guidelines recommend 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity each day for teens. Moderate activity should account for some of this time each day (30 minutes a day is recommended for adults). It is also associated with many of the health benefits of activity described in this book, such as controlling your level of body fat, and is well suited for people of varying abilities.

Vigorous Aerobics

Step 2 of the Physical Activity Pyramid represents vigorous aerobics, which includes any exercise that you can do for a long time without stopping and that is vigorous enough to increase your heart rate, make you breathe faster, and make you sweat. Thus these activities are more intense than moderate activities such as brisk walking. Vigorous aerobics, such as jogging and aerobic dance, are typically continuous in nature. Like moderate activity, they provide many health and wellness benefits, and they're especially helpful for building a high level of cardiorespiratory endurance. You should perform vigorous aerobics (or vigorous sport or recreation) at least three days a week for at least 20 minutes each day in order to meet national activity guidelines.

Vigorous aerobic activity helps you build cardiorespiratory endurance.

Vigorous Sport and Recreation

Like vigorous aerobics, vigorous sport and recreation (represented in step 3 of the Physical Activity Pyramid) require your heart to beat faster than normal and cause you to breathe faster and sweat more. As your muscles use more oxygen, your heart beats faster, and you breathe faster and more deeply to meet the oxygen demand. Unlike vigorous aerobics, however, vigorous sport and recreation often involve short bursts of activity followed by short bursts of rest (as in basketball, football, soccer, and tennis). When done for at least 20 minutes a day in bouts of 10 minutes or more at a time, these activities provide similar fitness, health, and wellness benefits to those of vigorous aerobics. They also help you build motor skills and contribute to healthy weight management. As with vigorous aerobics, you can use vigorous sport and recreation to meet national activity recommendation when you do them for at least 20 minutes a day on three days a week.

Muscle Fitness Exercises

Step 4 in the Physical Activity Pyramid represents muscle fitness exercises, which build your strength, muscular endurance, and power. Muscle fitness exercises include both resistance training (with weights or machines) and moving your own body weight (as in rock climbing, calisthenics, and jumping). This type of exercise produces general health and wellness benefits, as well as better performance, improved body appearance, a healthier back, better posture, and stronger bones. These exercises can be used to meet national activity guidelines and should be performed on two or three days a week.

Flexibility Exercises

Step 5 of the Physical Activity Pyramid represents flexibility exercises. According to ACSM, flexibility exercises improve postural stability and balance. There is also some evidence that flexibility exercises may reduce soreness, prevent injuries, and reduce risk of back pain. Flexibility exercises also improve your performance in activities such as gymnastics and dance. They also are used in therapy to help people who have been injured. Two examples of flexibility exercise are stretching and yoga (figure 5.3). To build and maintain flexibility, you should perform flexibility exercise at least three days a week.

Avoiding Inactivity

Just below the Physical Activity Pyramid (see figure 5.2) you'll notice pictures of a television set and a video game controller with an X over them. This illustration emphasizes the fact that being sedentary, or inactive, poses a health risk.

Just as you should do 60 minutes of physical activity each day, drawing from the five types of activity presented in the pyramid, you should also avoid the inactivity that is common among people who log too much "screen time" on a daily basis. Screen time refers to time spent in front of a TV, computer game, phone screen, or any other device that substitutes inactivity for activities from the pyramid. A recent survey of children and teens in the United States found that they watch TV for an average of nearly four hours a day! Sixty-eight percent of teens have a TV in their room, and of course many also spend screen time on computers, video games, movies, and cell phones, more than doubling the amount of time they spend watching a screen. Research shows that screen time results in inactivity and increases health risk. We all need to take time to recover from daily stresses and prepare for new challenges, so periods of rest and sleep are important for good health. Some activities of daily living - such as studying, reading, and even a moderate amount of screen time - are appropriate. But general inactivity or sedentary living is harmful to your health. Your choices from active areas of the pyramid should exceed your choices from the inactivity area.

Balancing Energy

The top of the pyramid presents a balance scale illustrating the need to balance the energy you take in (food) with the energy you put out (activity). Energy balance means that the calories in the food you eat each day are equal to the calories you expend in exercise each day. Balancing your energy in this way is essential to maintaining a healthy body composition.

Name: _____

Period: _____

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY - QUESTIONS

Write the letter, of the best response, in the blank provided.

- _____ 1. What type of physical activities help to enhance physical stability and flexibility?
- A. Bone-Strengthening Activities C. Muscle-Strengthening Activities
B. Balance and Stretching Activities D. Aerobic Activities
- _____ 2. Push-ups and lifting weights are good examples of what type of physical activity?
- A. Muscle Strengthening Activities C. Bone Strengthening Activities
B. Aerobic Activities D. Flexibility Activities
- _____ 3. Regular physical activity and physical fitness make important contributions to one's health, sense of well-being and maintenance of a healthy body weight.
- A. True B. False
- _____ 4. People with higher levels of physical fitness at a _____ risk of developing chronic diseases such as coronary artery disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and certain types of cancer.
- A. Higher B. Lower
- _____ 5. What is moderate intensity activity?
- A. an activity that increases your heart rate but you are still able to carry on a conversation
B. an activity that increases your heart rate but you are unable to carry on a conversation
C. an activity that does not increase your heart rate
- _____ 6. Physical activity must be strenuous in order for it to be beneficial.
- A. True B. False
- _____ 7. What is the recommendation for physical activity for young people?
- A. at least 30 minutes a day of vigorous activity, three times per week
B. at least 30 minutes of moderate activity, most days of the week
C. at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity activity, most days of the week
D. at least 60 minutes of light activity, most days of the week
- _____ 8. Some activities can be moderate or vigorous depending on your effort level.
- A. True B. False
- _____ 9. Which of the answers below are examples of moderate activities?
- A. walking slowly, floating in a pool, bicycling 2-3 mph
B. playing video games, sleeping, watching TV
C. bicycling 5-9 mph, walking briskly, recreational swimming
D. Question 10
- _____ 10. Which answer below gives two examples of the recommended physical activity for young people?
- A. walking for 30 min, or walking for 30 minutes and swimming for 15 minutes
B. cycling 60 minutes, or cycling 15 minutes, swimming 15 minutes and walking for 30 minutes
C. running for 30 minutes or cycling for 30minutes

SHORT ANSWER:

11. Do you regularly participate in moderate exercise? If so, how often, and how many minutes each session?

12. According to your answer in #11, do you get the recommended amount of moderate physical activity?

13 What are your favorite type of physical activities?

14 Do you feel exercise is important? Explain why or why not.