

## 10 facts on physical activity



### **Physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality**

Globally, six percent of deaths are attributed to physical **inactivity**. This follows high blood pressure (13%), tobacco use (9%) and is equal to high blood glucose (6%).

Moreover, physical inactivity is the main cause for approximately 21–25% of breast and colon cancers, 27% of diabetes and 30% of ischaemic heart disease burden.



### **Regular physical activity helps to maintain a healthy body**

Physically active persons:

- have lower rates of: coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, colon and breast cancer, and depression;
- have a lower risk of falling and of hip or vertebral fractures;
- are more likely to maintain their weight.



### **Physical activity should not be mistaken for sport**

Physical activity is any bodily movement produced by the skeletal muscles that uses energy. This includes sports, exercise and other activities such as playing, walking, doing household chores, gardening, and dancing.



## **Both moderate and vigorous intensity physical activity bring health benefits**

Intensity refers to the rate at which the activity is being performed. It can be thought of as *"how hard a person works to do the activity"*.

The intensity of different forms of physical activity varies between people. Depending on an individual's relative level of fitness, examples of moderate physical activity could include: brisk walking, dancing or household chores. Examples of vigorous physical activity could be: running, fast cycling, fast swimming or moving heavy loads.



## **5-17 years old**

People aged 5–17 should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily. Amounts of physical activity greater than 60 minutes provide additional health benefits.



## **18-64 years old**

Adults aged 18–64 should do at least 150 minutes of moderately intense physical activity throughout the week or at least 75 minutes of vigorous- activity throughout the week or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous activity. All activity should be performed in bouts of at least 10 minutes duration.



### **Adults aged 65 and above**

The main recommendations for adults and older adults are the same. In addition, older adults with poor mobility should do physical activity to enhance balance and prevent falls three or more days per week. When older adults cannot do the recommended amount of physical activity due to health conditions, they should be as physically active as their abilities and conditions allow.



### **These recommendations are relevant to all healthy adults**

Unless specific medical conditions indicate the contrary, these recommendations apply to all people, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity or income level. They also apply to individuals with chronic non-communicable conditions, not related to mobility, such as hypertension or diabetes. These recommendations can be valid for adults with disabilities as well.



### **Doing some physical activity is better than doing none**

Inactive people should start with small amounts of physical activity and gradually increase duration, frequency and intensity over time. Inactive adults, older adults and those with disease limitations will have added health benefits when they become more active.

Pregnant, postpartum women and persons with cardiac events may need take extra precautions and seek medical advice before striving to achieve the recommended levels of physical activity.

to



**Supportive environments and communities may help people to be more physically active**

Urban and environmental policies can have huge potential to increase the physical activity levels in the population. Examples of these policies include: ensuring that walking, cycling and other forms of active transportation are accessible and safe for all; or that schools have safe spaces and facilities for students to spend their free time actively.