

# 01: THE UK PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES



This summary of the guidelines is drawn from the 2011 updated Chief Medical Officers (CMO) UK Physical Activity Guidelines supporting documents,<sup>1,2</sup> and the British Association of Sport and Exercise Scientists consensus report.<sup>3</sup>

## The UK Physical Activity Guidelines advice for adults (aged 19-65) recommend:

Aim to be active daily. Activity should add up to over 150 minutes per week by participating in at least 30 minutes of *moderate* intensity physical activity on 5 or more days a week, or in multiple bouts of 10 minutes or more

Comparable benefits can be achieved through *vigorous* activity of 75 minutes a week, or in a combination of moderate and vigorous activity

Adults should also undertake physical activity to improve *muscle strength* on at least two days a week

All adults should *minimize* extended sedentary (sitting) periods

- Download Factsheet 4: Adults (19-64 years)
- Download Adult PA Guideline infographic here

The dose-response relationship between physical activity and health is clear across all ages and there are therefore guidelines for all ages of life. The main differences are summarized below.

## UK Guidelines for Under-fives not yet walking

Physical activity should be encouraged from birth, particularly through floor based play and water based activities in safe environments.

All under 5s should minimize the time spent being sedentary (restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except sleeping).

- Download Factsheet 1: Early years (under 5s not yet walking)

## Guidelines for Under-fives capable of walking

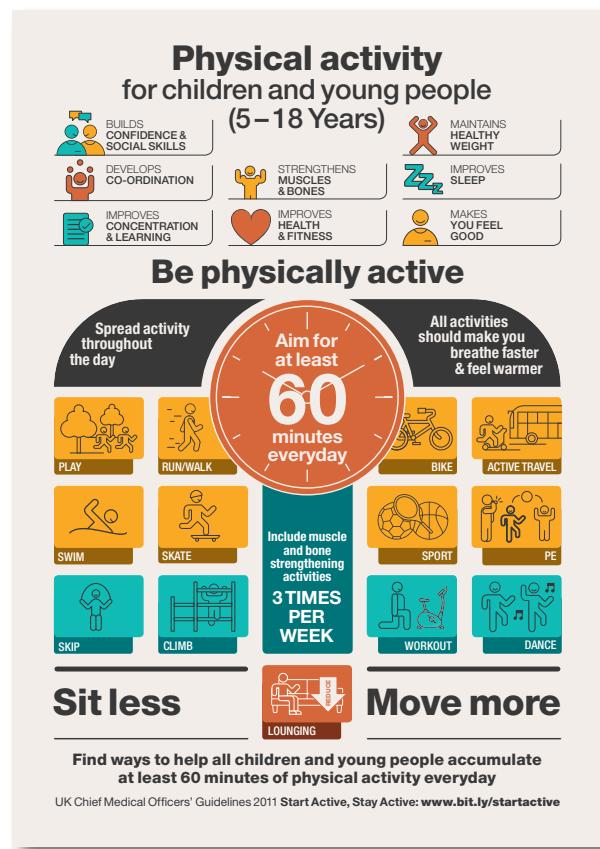
Children of pre-school age who are capable of walking unaided should be physically active for at least 180 minutes (3hrs) spread throughout the day.

All under 5s should minimize the amount of time spent being sedentary (restrained or sitting) for extended periods (except sleeping time).

- Download Factsheet 2: Physical activity for early years (under-fives) children capable of walking
- Download Birth to 5 years infographic here



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## UK Guidelines for Children and young people (5-18 year olds)

There is a greater emphasis on encouraging at least 60 minutes a day and up to several hours every day of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity.

Three days a week should include vigorous intensity activities that strengthen muscle and bone.

This age group should also minimize the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

- Download Factsheet 3: Children and young people (5-18 years)
- Download Children and young people infographic here

## UK Guidelines for Older people (65+)

Older adults should aim to be active 150 minutes (two and half hours) – each week of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity (and adults should aim to do some physical activity every day).

Muscle strengthening activity should also be included twice a week.

Any individual at risk of falling should incorporate activity to improve balance and coordination on at least two days a week. All adults should also minimize the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods.

- Download Factsheet 5: Older adults (65+ years)

Depending on body weight, 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity will expend about 800-1200 kcal.<sup>3</sup> For most health outcomes, additional benefits occur as the amount of physical activity increases via increased intensity, frequency and or duration.

## The CMO Infographic for Pregnant women

This is to help health professionals explain the benefits of activity during pregnancy during consultations with pregnant women.

- Download the Physical activity and pregnant women infographic here

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## Assessment of present levels of activity:

In most consultations with patients, opportunities arise where the subject of physical activity may be used for prevention or treatment of disease. Assessing a baseline of activity is recommended to either raise the issue of physical activity, measure progress or help shape any subsequent advice. There are many assessment questionnaires available and two commonly used are:

- *The UK General Practice Physical Activity Questionnaire (GPPAQ)*<sup>4</sup> can be used to categorize patients into recommended levels of activity
- *The Scottish Physical Activity Question (Scot-PASQ)*.<sup>5</sup> A brief assessment using just 3 questions. Used as a motivational screening tool to help raise the issue of physical activity and deliver advice

1. In the past week, on how many days have you been physically active for a total of 30 minutes or more?
  2. If four days or less, have you been physically active for at least two and a half hours (150 minutes) over the course of the past week?
  3. Are you interested in being more physically active?
- Read the brief guidance on how to use the Scot-PASQ tool by [downloading it here](#):<sup>5</sup>

### Read codes

Accurate coding of activity for computer systems that correlate with the CMO guidelines and Scot-PASQ.

<b>Question 1</b>	In the past week, on how many days have you been physically active for a total of 30 minutes or more? Physical activity may include walking and cycling, getting to and from places, gardening, exercise or sport which lasts more than 10 minutes
>30 minutes 5 times a week	XaPP0
<30 minutes 5 times a week	XaPP4
<b>Question 2</b>	If four days or less, have you been physically active for at least two and a half hours (150 minutes) over the course of the past week?
>150 minutes per week	XacSy
<150 minutes per week	XacSx
<b>Question 3</b>	If less than 150 minutes activity a week then ask 'are you interested in being more physically active?'
Brief intervention offered	XaRAV
Brief intervention completed	XaPjx
Brief intervention follow up	XaRDt
Brief intervention declined	XaX5H

## Terms used in these factsheets:

**Physical activity** is defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. It may be done as part of playing, working, active transportation, house chores and recreational activities.<sup>6</sup>

reclining posture. In general, this means that any time a person is sitting or lying down, they are engaging in sedentary behaviour. Common sedentary behaviours include TV viewing, video game playing, computer screen time, driving and reading.<sup>1</sup>

**Exercise** is a subcategory of physical activity that is planned, structured, repetitive and purposeful in the sense that the improvement or maintenance of one or more components of physical fitness is the objective.

**Moderate intensity** physical activity causes adults to feel warmer, breathe harder and the heart to beat faster, with brisk walking being the easiest example to recognize.

**Sedentary behaviour** refers to any waking activity characterized by an energy expenditure  $\leq 1.5$  metabolic equivalents and a sitting or

**Vigorous intensity** physical activity causes adults to get warm quickly, breathe much harder, perspire and find it difficult to maintain a conversation.

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## Take home message:

Physical activity is an important part of the lifestyle for any patient because of the overwhelming evidence of the health benefits at all ages. It can increase their quality of life and lead to better health outcomes.

## Consider:

1. Auditing your patients to see if they have been offered any physical activity advice.
2. Add read codes on physical activity into your computer system and use them in consultations.
3. Advising on diagnosis of the importance of this lifestyle approach for their own well-being.

## Benefits to health professionals:

Reduced drug costs, appointments and visits.

## Signpost patients to:

The public website [Benefit from Activity](#) containing this information

*Extracted from the Wales HEIW CPD module on physical activity [Motivate2Move](#). Now part of the RCGP Clinical Priority on physical activity and lifestyle*

## REFERENCES

1 Department of Health. Start Active, Stay Active. A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers. 2011. (cited 2019 Jul 03) Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/start-active-stay-active-a-report-on-physical-activity-from-the-four-home-countries-chief-medical-officers>

2 Department of Health. UK Physical Activity Guidelines. 2011. (cited 2019 Jul 03) Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-physical-activity-guidelines>

3 O'Donovan G, Blazevich AJ, Boreham C, Cooper AR, Crank H, Ekelund U, Fox KR, Gately P, Giles-Corti B, Gill JM, Hamer M. The ABC of Physical Activity for Health: a consensus statement from the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences. *Journal of Sports Sciences*. 2010 Apr; 28(6):573-91.

4 Physical Activity Policy and Health Improvement Directorate. The general practice physical activity questionnaire (GPPAQ); a screening tool to assess adult physical activity levels within primary care. 2009. (cited 2019 Jul 03) Available from: [www.healthscotland.scot/health-topics/physical-activity/screening-for-physical-activity-levels-using-scot-pasq](http://www.healthscotland.scot/health-topics/physical-activity/screening-for-physical-activity-levels-using-scot-pasq)

5 NHS Health Scotland. The Scottish Physical Active Question (Scot-PASQ). (cited 2019 Jul 03). Available from: <http://www.healthscotland.scot/publications/physical-activity-pathway-for-secondary-care>

6 WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. (cited 2019 Jul 03). Available from: <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/pa/en/>