

# Physical Activity Matters

Important Steps for YOUR Health

## Physical Activity and the Health Benefits of Regular Exercise



**NorthCare Network**

# Physical Activity Matters-Part 3

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says, “Regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health.”

## What is exercise and how does it work?

*Exercise is a form of physical activity that is planned, structured, repetitive, and performed with the goal of improving health or fitness.<sup>1</sup>*

Exercise, or physical activity, makes you feel better and triggers beneficial chemicals in your brain—**serotonin**, **endorphins**, and **dopamine**—that dull pain, lighten mood, and relieve stress. It provides **psychological and emotional benefits**. It can protect against diseases and prevent early death.

## Why is a balanced fitness program so important?

A balanced fitness program includes **aerobic** (for endurance), **muscle strengthening** (for resistance), and **stretching exercises** (for flexibility and balance). Contracting muscles help promote new tissue growth and repair. Aerobic exercise improves cardiorespiratory fitness and increases oxygen flow to the brain. This makes your **heart stronger and improves mental alertness**. Through regular exercise, your blood pressure, blood sugars, and cholesterol can be lowered.

It is important to do all types of exercise, including combinations of **moderate** and **vigorous** activities. Activities can range from brisk walking (**aerobic**), to lifting weights (**muscle and bone strengthening**), and yoga (**flexibility**). Here are a few additional guidelines:

- Choose physical activities that are appropriate for your age and fitness level in consultation with **your doctor(s) or health provider(s)**.
- People who have been inactive should “**start slow**” and **gradually increase** activity levels over time.
- Be sure to use **appropriate gear** for whatever activities you pick. Dress warmly for winter activities, and for other activities like walking or running, be sure to wear good footwear with proper support to prevent injuries.
- Adults with disabilities should consult with care providers for activities that are appropriate for their abilities. Organizations, like **SAIL—the Disability Network of the Upper Peninsula**—have group and individualized health and recreational activities,







like dancing, biking, and kayaking, through their **SPAR (Single Point for Activities and Recreation) program**. No matter what your ability level, there are fitness options available.

**The Importance of Aerobic Exercise-Moderate and Vigorous.** There are degrees of aerobic exercise from inactive, moderate, to vigorous. Aerobic exercise has two main health benefits: *it reduces stress and builds stamina.*

- Moderate exercise includes light yard or house work, brisk walking, or biking at a casual pace.
- Vigorous exercise includes jogging/running, swimming, cross-country skiing, or dancing.

## General Guidelines for Exercise and Physical Activity

Set aside some time every day for fitness. For adults *over the age of 40, a weekly minimum of 150 minutes (or 30 minutes, five days a week)* is recommended for health benefits. If you can exercise closer to *300 minutes (one hour, five days a week)*, this will provide additional health benefits.

If these goals are not realistic, *any activity is better than none*. **Inactivity should be avoided** as it puts you at higher “risk for serious diseases and early death.”

**Factors of Exercise.** Set exercise goals for **1) frequency** (how often), **2) intensity** (how hard), and **3) duration** (how much time spent) or **distance** (how far) doing your activities. By gradually increasing these factors, your health benefits should increase. **Frequency is the most important factor** for improving your physical fitness.



*Physical exercise is an important part of wellness, along with good nutrition and sufficient rest.* Exercise is also proven to reduce chronic pain over time. Remember, it's never too late to start exercising.

## It's Your Choice.

Exercise can relieve stress and anxiety; improve muscle and bone development; reduce fat and control weight; improve blood pressure and cholesterol; and contribute to better health and longevity.

For more information, call **Katrenea Hite, Integrated Care Specialist**, at (906) 225-7344