

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

A daily brisk walk can help you live a healthier life



1. Be Active! – as a Food Based Dietary Guideline of South Africa

In South Africa we have something that we call the Food Based Dietary Guidelines. They are 11 “rules” or “messages” that we can follow to live a healthy, well balanced life. These Food Based Dietary Guidelines were revised in 2012, and the second Food Based Dietary Guideline for South Africa is “Be Active!”.

In South Africa we have something that we call a “double burden” – thus we have both underweight and overweight individuals in our country and both cases are very serious. It is interesting to see that Physical Activity was still included in these “rules”; although we generally think that exercise is only important for overweight individuals. In South Africa we furthermore have a very high incidence of Non-communicable diseases (NCD’s). {These are diseases that could have been possibly prevented by a healthier life-style}.

Physical activity is a determinant of energy balance and there is a well-established link between the decreased risk of mortality and morbidity in individuals that are physically active.

2. Recommendation

The current recommendation of physical activity is: 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day of the week. This can be accumulated in bouts of at least 10 minutes during the course of the day (for adults). For children and adolescents this recommendation is 60 minutes.


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3. Advantages of physical activity

- 🍓 Help maintain a healthy body weight
- 🍓 Prevent/manage various condition such as heart disease, hypertension and type 2 diabetes
- 🍓 Strengthen bones/muscles
- 🍓 Improve mood
- 🍓 Improve balance and coordination
- 🍓 Protects against stress and burnout

4. Obesity

Individuals become obese due to a disrupted energy balance (energy intake and energy expenditure). Individuals that are obese and wish to lose weight need to have higher energy expenditure than energy intake. Thus, doing some physical activity could help individuals to lose weight and live a healthier lifestyle.

5. Non-communicable diseases

Physical activity is a modifier of the risk factors of chronic diseases pertaining to lifestyle. Physical activity can be as effective as medical treatment, and in some instances can be even more successful than medication for the following conditions:

- 🍓 Insulin resistance
- 🍓 Type 2 diabetes
- 🍓 Dyslipidaemia
- 🍓 Hypertension

6. Bone health

Regular exercise has a protective effect on bone and can reduce the risk of frailty and osteoporotic fractures in life

7. Walking as physical activity

Walking is an excellent way of getting to the recommended amount of exercise per day. Walking is a cardiovascular type of exercise, but you could always add some extra ankle weight or 1kg weights in each hand to make it more challenging. Walking is a whole body workout, it is free, you don't need lots of equipment, you can do it indoor (treadmill) or outdoor and it isn't too hectic on your joints.


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