

# Exercise

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## About exercise

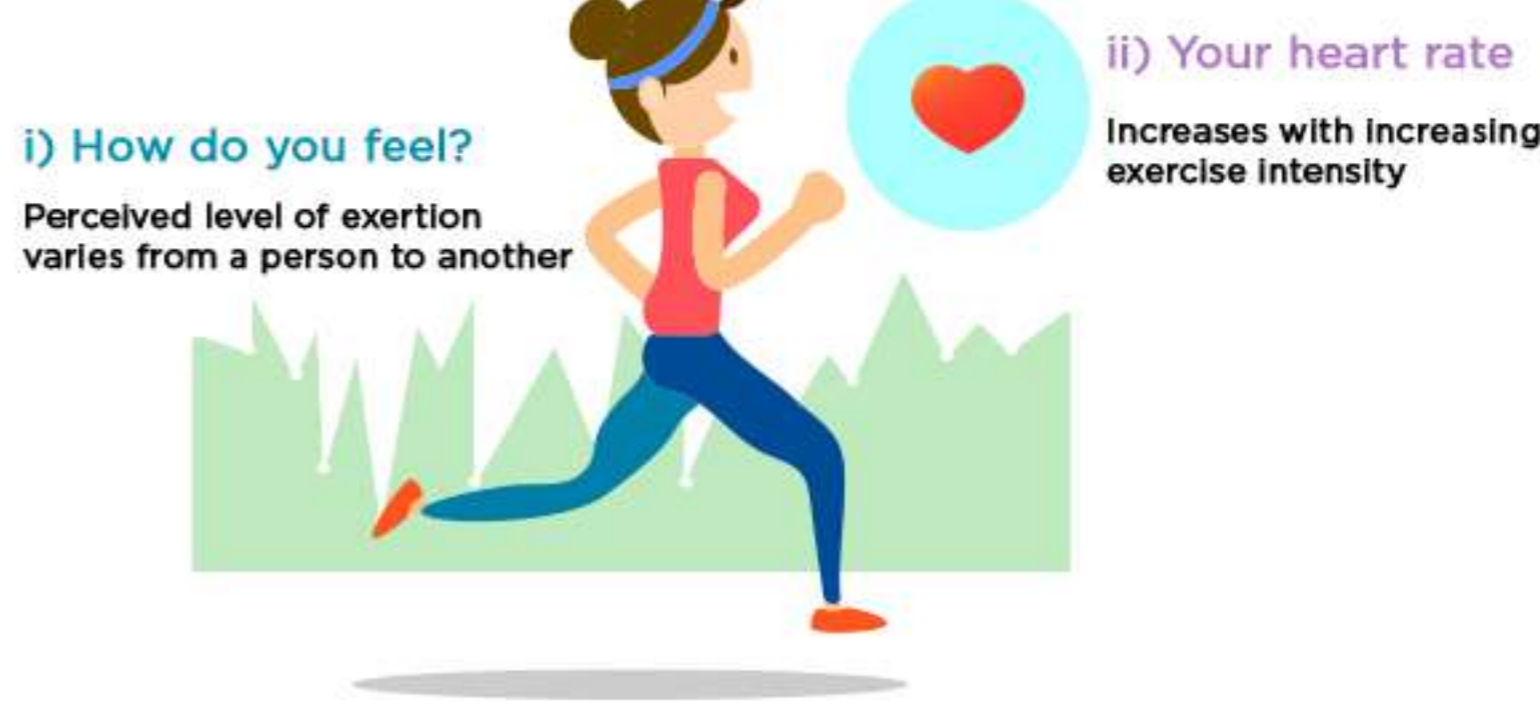
You may be aware of the importance of regular physical activity, but do you know what type of exercise is suitable for you, how often you need to exercise, and how hard you should be working out? Exercising at the correct intensity can help you get the most benefit from your workout. This article will help you understand better about your working-out plans.

In fact, exercise is important for physical fitness and to promote overall wellness of people of all ages. Apart from helping you in managing your weight, staying physically active also helps to control or reduce your risks of **high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and heart disease**.<sup>1</sup>



## What is exercise intensity?

Exercise intensity is a measure of how hard the activity feels to you when you are doing an aerobic activity, such as walking or biking. You can know how intense your exercise is by measuring the items shown in Figure 1<sup>2</sup>:



Your perceived exertion is well-correlated with your heart rate. If you think you are working hard, your heart rate is likely elevated!

Figure 1. How intense is your exercise?

You can also measure your exercise intensity using the talk test – see Figure 2.<sup>3</sup>

<p><b>Moderate-intensity activity</b></p> <p>During the activity, you can</p> <p><b>TALK</b></p> <p><b>SING</b></p>	<p><b>Vigorous-intensity activity</b></p> <p>You cannot say more than a few words without pausing for a breath</p>
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Figure 2. The talk test

So, what are the examples of moderate-intensity and vigorous-intensity activities?<sup>3</sup>

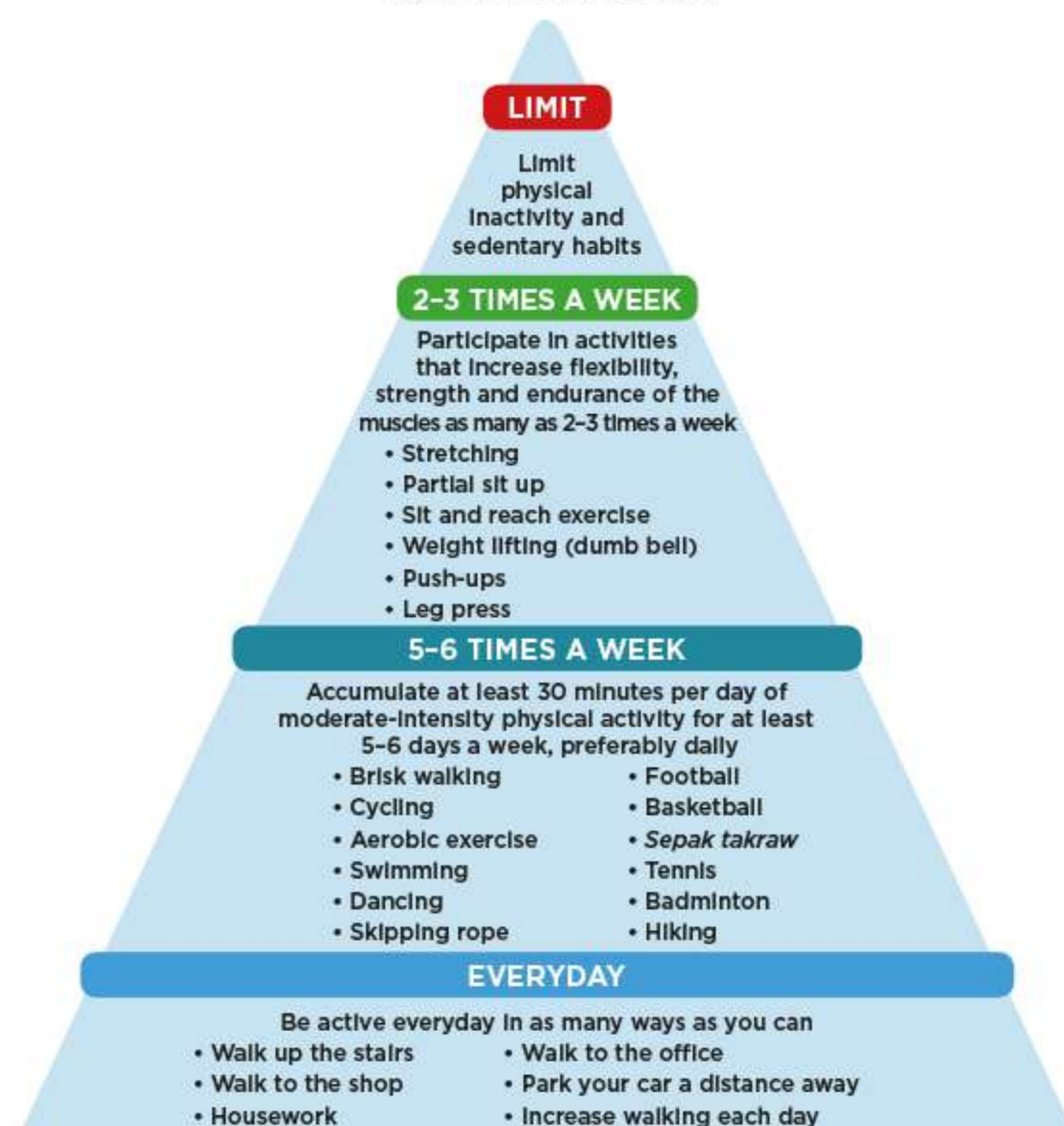
### Moderate-intensity activities



## Physical activities for different groups of individuals

1) If you want to improve overall wellness<sup>1</sup>:

### Physical activity pyramid



• **30 minutes of moderate activity per day** is important for limiting the risks of chronic diseases, including coronary heart disease and diabetes.

• **45-60 minutes of moderate activity per day** is required to prevent the transition to overweight or obesity.

• **60-90 minutes of moderate activity per day** could help to prevent weight gain and regain.

### 2) Overweight?<sup>1</sup>

• Initiate physical activity slowly, with gradual increased intensity.

• Break a single, long-period activity into several short-period workouts.

• Perform **45-60 minutes of moderate activity per day** to prevent the transition from overweight to obesity.

• Perform **60-90 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per day** or lesser amounts of vigorous activity to prevent weight gain or regain (for formerly obese individuals).

• Talk to your doctor if you are unsure which type of exercise is suitable for you to avoid unnecessary injuries.

### 3) High blood pressure?<sup>4</sup>

• Perform **30-45 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise most days of the week** (eg, brisk walking).

• However, talk to your doctor before starting an exercise programme.

### 4) High cholesterol?<sup>5</sup>

• Perform **30-45 minutes per day of aerobic activity** (brisk walking, jogging, cycling and swimming) **for at least 5 times a week**.

### 5) Diabetes?

• Perform **30 minutes per day (at least 5 times a week) of moderate-intensity exercise +/– 20 minutes per day (at least 5 times a week) of vigorous aerobic exercise + ≥2 sessions per week of resistance exercise** (eg, lifting weights)<sup>6</sup>

• However, you should consult your doctor to determine your level of fitness before you begin any exercise programme. You need to know what types of exercise are good for you, as some **complications of diabetes** make certain types of physical activity bad choices.<sup>7</sup>

### 6) Stressed out?

Stress may increase your risks of getting high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.<sup>8</sup> Exercise is an effective way to fight and overcome stress. You can walk, climb stairs, jog, cycle, do yoga, practise tai chi, do gardening, lift weights or swim, depending on your preference.<sup>9</sup>



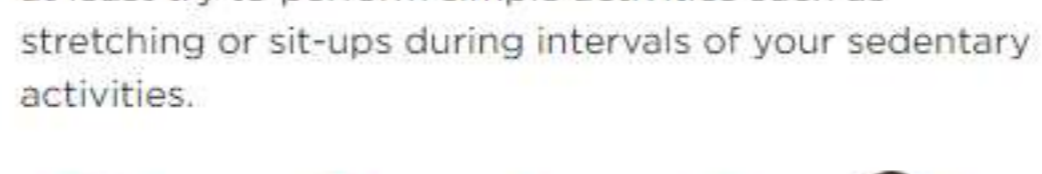
### Don't be sedentary!

Physical inactivity not only refers to absence from physical activity, but also participation in physical passive behaviours such as<sup>1</sup>:

- Television watching
- Reading
- Working at the computer
- Talking over the phone
- Driving a car

Staying sedentary is bad for you! You should avoid being physically inactive for more than 2 hours in a day! If it is unavoidable (eg, due to work), you should

at least try to perform simple activities such as stretching or sit-ups during intervals of your sedentary activities.



### Always simple and have no time for exercise?

Here are some simple tips to help you stay active despite your busy schedule<sup>10</sup>:

- Increase walking**—You can walk to a nearby shop instead of driving, park farther away at the shopping mall and walk the extra distance, or take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walking for at least 30 minutes per day can give you a better heart health!
- Do housework
- Work in the garden
- Stand up while talking on the telephone
- Walk the dog
- Stretch to reach items in high places and squat or bend to look at items at floor level

## Don't wait, start now!

Maybe you have never exercised and feel that starting the journey is difficult. Here are some tips to help you get started<sup>11</sup>:

- Choose activities that are sustainable and enjoyable for you
- Get an exercise companion so that you are less likely to skip out – two of you can motivate one another
- Set goals to keep you going when you feel demotivated
- Reward yourself after you complete a workout successfully (but please, not with food!)

You can monitor your progress by keeping a record of your workouts. Fitness tracking devices, fitness apps, or even some new smartphones and smart watches can help you with this, and they are all very convenient to use. So, why wait? Start exercising now!

## References

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