

Five simple activity goals



Diabetes magazine columnist Craig Wise explains the Government's five exercise guidelines and offers some tips on how to put them into action.

To keep us on our toes – quite literally – the Government has easy-to-follow guidelines for activity. So let's have a look at what they recommend and how you can fit them into your life.

1

Sit less, move more! Break up long periods of sitting.

Many of us spend our days in sedentary roles, often sitting at our desks from the time we arrive at work until lunchtime and then again until it's home time. The only time we leave our desks is to get a coffee or food (which we eat sat back at our desks). And when the workday is done, heading home exhausted from the day of sitting at our desks, we then spend the evening watching the TV. One of the largest studies ever carried out, involving 800,000 people, found that those who are sedentary have twice the likelihood of dying from a heart attack or stroke.

The answer is to sit less and move more. Try setting a timer to remind you to leave your desk and walk around, even for a quick lap of the office, and remember to get away from your desk at lunchtime. Ask to try a standing desk at work. And if you are enjoying an evening sitting in front of the TV get up and be active during those annoying ad breaks.

In a study from Australia, researchers asked 70 healthy adults to sit for nine hours. Every few hours they had to eat and their blood sugar and insulin levels were tested. Then they did it all over again, this time taking regular activity breaks. The study found that just by standing and walking every 30 minutes participants reduced their blood sugar levels by 38 percent and their insulin levels by 26 percent (MC Peddie et al, Am J Clin Nutr. 2013).

**2**

Do at least 2.5 hours of moderate (or 75 minutes vigorous) physical activity spread through the week.

Two and a half hours sounds like a long time to be active but, spread over seven days of the week, it is only 22 minutes a day – that's not so bad is it?

And those 22 minutes don't have to be done in one go. Do 10 minutes in the morning or evening, plus a nice brisk walk during your lunchtime and you are well on your way to achieving the goal.

3

For extra health benefits aim for five hours of moderate (or 2.5 hours of vigorous) physical activity spread through the week.

The previous guideline's 2.5 hours of exercise per week recommendation is the bare minimum that the Government believes everyone should do. To really make a difference to your life in terms of seeing health benefits and feeling the best increasing this to five hours is the way to go. If you think five hours is too much then work up to it, adding a little to your everyday activity (walk a little further, do an extra length of the pool – whatever your activity is).

4

Do muscle strengthening activities on at least two days each week.

You don't need to rush out to join the gym or buy exercise equipment at home. Incorporating some resistance training into your weekly activity has numerous health benefits but there are a range of bodyweight activities that you can do at home or the park that will help you tick this one off your list.

A walk to the local park, some body weight exercises there, and then a brisk walk home will see you meeting this recommendation and the one above – and double up as some quiet mental health time too.



5

Doing some physical activity is better than doing none.

There isn't a lot more to be said – a little activity beats nothing! Start small and work your way up.

Take small consistent activity bites and the changes will come – soon it will be just a part of your life.

TIPS

Five quick tips to increase daily activity:

1. Sit less and **move more** at work
2. Aim for **22 minutes** activity each day
3. Do a little more each day to reach **5 hours a week**
4. Try new ways to add **bodyweight activities** to your exercise
5. Take small **activity bites** during the day



Diabetes New Zealand is a leading national organisation and registered charity. Our aim is to support all people affected by diabetes to live well through: Providing information and support to help people take charge of their health • Acting as an advocate and representing all people with, or at risk of developing, diabetes • Raising awareness of diabetes, especially around lifestyle factors that can help prevent or delay type 2 and help manage and control type 1 and type 2.