

## Endurance Exercises

### What Are Endurance Exercises?

Endurance exercises are any activity - walking, jogging, swimming, raking - that increases your heart rate and breathing for an extended period of time.



### How Much Exercise Should I Do? How Often Should I Do Endurance Exercises

Build up your endurance gradually, starting out with as little as 5 minutes of endurance activities at a time, if you need to.

Starting out at a lower level of effort and working your way up gradually is especially important if you have been inactive for a long time. **It may take months to go from a very long-standing sedentary lifestyle to doing some of the activities suggested in this section.**

Your goal is to work your way up, eventually, to a moderate-to-vigorous level that increases your breathing and heart rate. **It should feel somewhat hard** to you .

Once you reach your goal, you can divide your exercise into sessions of **no less than 10 minutes at a time**, if you want to, as long as they add up to a total of a minimum of 30 minutes at the end of the day. Doing less than 10 minutes at a time won't give you the desired cardiovascular and respiratory system benefits.

(The exception to this guideline is when you are just beginning to do endurance activities.)



Your goal is to build up to a **minimum of 30 minutes of endurance exercise on most or all days of the week**. More often is better, and every day is best.

### What Safety Issues Should I Consider ?

Endurance activities should not make you breathe so hard that you can't talk. They should not cause dizziness or chest pain.

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Do a little light activity before and after your endurance exercise session, to warm up and cool down (example: easy walking).

Stretch **after** your endurance activities, when your muscles are warm.

As you get older, your body may become less likely to trigger the urge to drink when you need water. In other words, you may need water, but you won't feel thirsty. Be sure to drink liquids when you are doing any activity that makes you lose fluid through sweat. The rule of thumb is that, by the time you notice you are thirsty, you are already somewhat dehydrated (low on fluid). This guideline is important year-round, but is especially important in hot weather, when dehydration is more likely. If your doctor has asked you to limit your fluids, be sure to check with him or her before increasing the amount of fluid you drink while exercising.



Congestive heart failure and kidney disease are examples of chronic diseases that often require fluid restriction.

Older adults can be affected by heat and cold more than other adults. In extreme cases, exposure to too much heat can cause heat stroke, and exposure to very cold temperatures can lead to hypothermia (a dangerous drop in body temperature). If you are exercising outdoors, dress in layers so you can add or remove clothes as needed.

Use safety equipment to prevent injuries. For example,

wear a helmet for bicycling, and



wear protective equipment for activities like skiing and skating.



wear stable shoes made for that purpose. if you walk or jog,

## **When I'm Exercising , How Do I Know if I'm Exercising Enough?**

Here are some informal guidelines you can use to estimate how much effort you are putting into your endurance activities:

Talking doesn't take much effort during moderate activity. During vigorous activity, talking is difficult.

If you tend to perspire, you probably won't sweat during light activity (except on hot days). You will sweat during vigorous or sustained moderate activity.

Your muscles may get a rubbery feeling after vigorous activity, but not after moderate activity.

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One doctor who specializes in exercise for older adults tells her patients this about how hard they should work during endurance activities: "If you can't talk while you're exercising, it's too difficult. If you can sing a song from an opera, it's too easy!"

## How Can I Judge My Progress?

When you are ready to progress, build up the amount of time you spend doing endurance activities first; then build up the difficulty of your activities later.

Example: First, gradually increase your time to 30 minutes over several days to weeks (or even months, depending on your condition) by walking longer distances, then start walking up steeper hills or walking more briskly.

## Examples of Endurance Activities

Examples of **moderate activities** for the average older adult .

Swimming

Bicycling

Cycling on a stationary bicycle

Gardening (mowing, raking)

Walking briskly on a level surface

Mopping or scrubbing floor

Golf, without a cart

Tennis (doubles)

Volleyball

Rowing



Examples of **vigorous activities**.

Climbing stairs or hills

Shoveling snow

Brisk bicycling up hills

Digging holes

Tennis (singles)

Swimming laps

Cross-country skiing

Downhill skiing

Hiking

Jogging



From: Exercise, National Institute of Aging