



BHF National Centre **physical activity+health**

Why is moderate intensity the focus of the physical activity recommendations?

Answer: Moderate intensity physical activity is recommended by the CMO as it provides health benefits and is an achievable goal for the most sedentary of the population.

The current physical activity recommendation for adults requires thirty minutes of at least moderate intensity activity a day on at least 5 days of the week. The rationale behind this recommendation, rather than to recommend more vigorous intensity activity, is as follows:

- The moderate intensity physical activity message is more biologically plausible and takes into account the needs of the most vulnerable groups. It is not necessary to do vigorous intensity exercise to accrue health benefits. Moderate intensity physical activity is seen as a good starting point that offers health benefits and minimal risks for the sedentary population.
- Although vigorous intensity physical activity may provide greater benefit for a specific biological outcome, moderate intensity physical activity may provide the best overall health benefit in at-risk populations due to its lower risk profile.¹
- The public health recommendation to be active for 30 minutes on most days may be realistic, whereas recommending ≥ 60 minutes of physical activity per day may not be as behaviourally accepted. This is important when considering the goal is to increase the likelihood of engaging sedentary adults in physical activity that may be sufficient for chronic disease risk reduction.²

References:

¹ Bouchard, C., Blair, S.N. & Haskell, W.L. (2007). *Physical Activity and Health*. Human Kinetics.

² Cerin, E., Leslie, E., Bauman, A. & Owen, N. (2005). Levels of Physical Activity for Colon Cancer Prevention Compared with Generic Public Health Recommendations: Population Prevalence and Sociodemographic Correlates. *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* 14(4): 1000-1002.

Free of charge BHF resources that might be of interest:

Get Active (G12)

Put your heart into walking (G26)

Physical activity and your heart (HIS1)

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