



#AHA18: New physical activity guidelines – a decade later



New physical activity guidelines were released at the American Heart Association (AHA) Meeting in Chicago. It is after 10 years that these guidelines have been updated.

It has now been widely established that physical activity is very important for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, stroke and other noncommunicable diseases. The new guidelines are a step in the right direction as they further reinforce the importance of moving more and sitting less.

Research shows that only 26% of men, 19% of women and 20% of adolescents report enough physical activity to meet the physical activity recommendations. This is cause for concern since low levels of physical activity combined with sedentary behaviour can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

The new and updated Physical Activity Guidelines were presented at #AHA18 by [Admiral Brett P. Giroir](#), MD, Assistant Secretary for Health at U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Some key recommendations as per the new guidelines include:

- At least three hours of activity a day for preschoolers in a variety of settings. These include children aged 3 to 5 who are being encouraged to be active throughout the day to facilitate growth and development.
- At least an hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity for children. Activities could include walking, running and any other form of exercise that would make the heart beat faster. In addition, the new guidelines recommend that there should be an increased focus on strength and muscle conditioning for children through the use of jump ropes and playground equipment. Schools are being encouraged to step up and develop physical education programmes for children to promote physical activity.
- Between 150 and 300 minutes of moderately intense aerobic activity for adults. Activities could include power walking, dancing, etc. Two days of strength training each week is also being recommended.

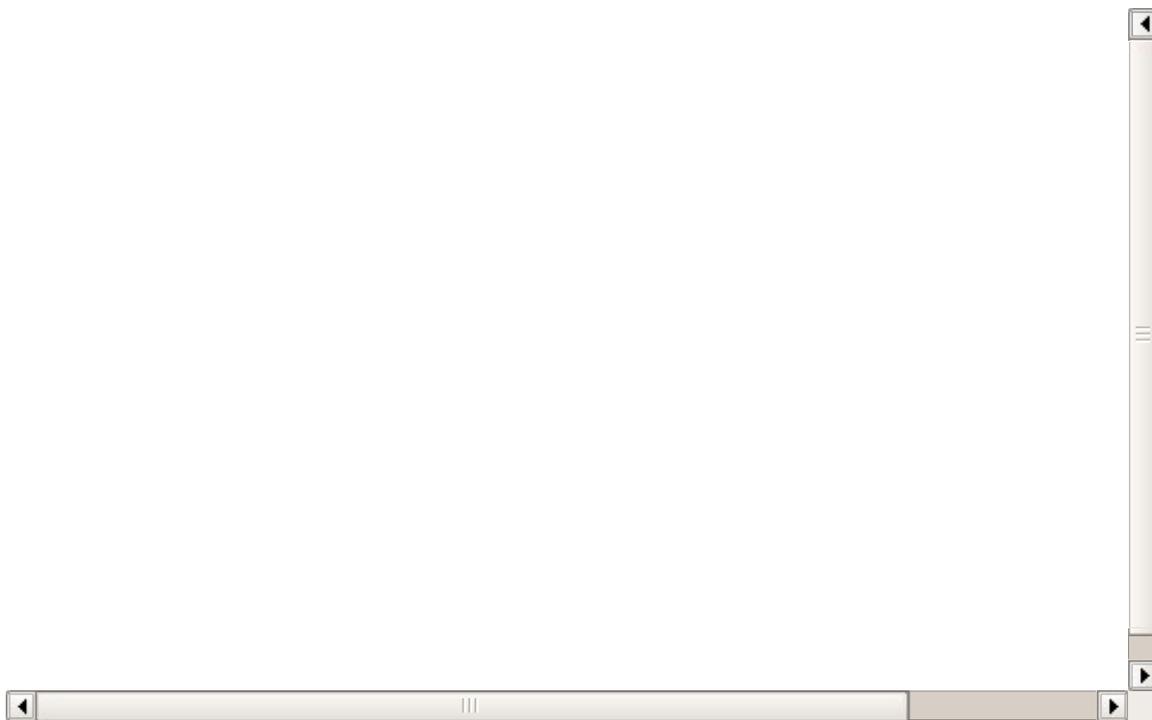
- 150 minutes of physical activity a week for pregnant women. However, this group is advised to consult with their specialists before starting any exercise or training programme.

Other policies that the AHA is advocating include improvement in bike and pedestrian infrastructure as well as a physical assessment and prescription of physical activity in the clinical environment and the workplace. The focus should be on creating programmes that get people of all ages to move.

The overall message is to move more and sit less. The new guidelines have been amended due to increasing evidence that shows the immediate health benefits of exercise. Not only does it reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, but it also reduces anxiety and blood pressure, has a positive impact on a person's quality of sleep and insulin sensitivity.

We can improve our health to quite an extent by simply moving - anytime, anywhere and by any means, explains Dr. Giroir. He also points out that the real challenge is not releasing the guidelines but implementing them.

[Dr. Eduardo Sanchez](#), Chief Medical Officer for Prevention at the American Heart Association shares remarks on the new guidelines.



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