



Why Be Active?

The importance of physical activity

www.shapeupsf.org



What is Physical Activity?

Physical activity does not have to mean going to the gym. Physical activity can be anything a child (or the child in you!) enjoys, ranging from team or individual sports to recreational activities such as walking, running, skating, bicycling, swimming, playground activities, and free-time play. Include physical activity as part of your family's daily routine and make it fun!

How often?

Experts recommend engaging in at least 30 minutes of aerobic activity three or more times a week to reduce the risk of chronic disease. If you don't think you can schedule 30 minutes at one time to get some physical activity, you can still gain significant health benefits by *accumulating* 30 minutes or more of moderate-intensity physical activity a day, at least five times a week. Moderate physical activity is anything that elevates your heart rate and makes you start to sweat such as brisk walking, gardening, bicycling, etc). Short spurts of exercise have been shown to reap similar benefits as longer workouts, so forget the "all or nothing attitude"!

To get 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a day, try breaking it into manageable chunks of 10 or 15 minutes each. Exercise when you wake up. Take a lunch break to re-energize and get the blood flowing again. Go for a power walk after dinner with a friend or family member, ride bikes with the kids, or walk the dog. It takes a little effort, but you'll be surprised to find that you *can* fit physical activity into your busy schedule. Begin adding these spurts of physical activity into your daily routine and you'll start feeling and looking better.

Health Benefits of Physical Activity

- Helps you maintain a healthy body weight
- Reduces stress and helps you relax
- Reduces the risk of developing chronic diseases (i.e. heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes)
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety

- Promotes emotional well-being and reduces feelings of stress
- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints
- Helps older adults become stronger and better able to move about without falling or becoming overly tired
- Makes you look and feel great

Ways to be Active

- Bike or walk to work
- Walk your kids to school
- Walk your dog
- Walk to your coworker's desk rather than calling or emailing
- Park the car farther away from your destination
- Get on or off the bus several blocks away
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator
- Play with children or pets
- Exercise while watching TV (i.e. use hand weights, stationary bike/treadmill/stair climber, or stretch)
- Dance!
- Keep a pair of comfortable walking or running shoes in your car and office and you will be ready for activity wherever you go!
- Do yard work
- Wash your car
- Take short trips on foot
- Take a family walk after dinner

Set physical activity goals for you and your family and reward yourselves as you meet them. Remember that being physically active can be fun!

The Shape Up SF Coalition is a driving force creating and promoting safe, healthy eating and active living environments in the City of San Francisco; it is a national model for results-focused community health promotion and improvement.

Visit us at: www.shapeupsf.org

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This fact sheet may be downloaded from www.shapeupsf.org



Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyLiving/>

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