

# Healthy Living Message

## Be Physically Active

*This information is for clinical staff to share with the Veteran.*

**Key Message for Veterans:** Avoid inactivity. Some activity is better than none. Aim for at least 2½ hours of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week. Every 10 minute session counts. Do strengthening activities at least 2 days each week.

### Expanded Message for Veterans:

- Less than half of U.S. adults get the amount of physical activity recommended in the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*.
- All adults should avoid inactivity. Some physical activity is better than none, and adults who participate in any amount of physical activity gain some health benefits.
- Physical activity is safe for almost everyone, and the health benefits of physical activity far outweigh the risks. If you do not have a chronic condition (such as diabetes, heart disease, or arthritis) and you do not have symptoms (e.g., chest pain or pressure, dizziness, or joint pain) you do not need to talk to a health care provider before you become more active.
- If you have a concern regarding a health condition, a conversation with a healthcare team member about what types of activity are best may be beneficial.
- Studies show that regular physical activity decreases the risk for developing depression, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, stroke, and some kinds of cancer.
- For important health benefits, you should do at least 2½ hours each week of moderate-intensity, or 1¼ hours a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both.
- Physical activity is anything that gets the body moving. Start at a comfortable level. Once this begins to seem easy, add a little more activity each time. Then try doing it more often.
- Your body is working at a moderate intensity when you can talk but not sing. Moderate-intensity physical activity includes things like walking fast, dancing, and raking leaves.
- Your body is working at a vigorous intensity when you cannot say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. Vigorous-intensity physical activity includes things like jogging, jumping rope, swimming laps, or riding a bike uphill.
- People of all ages and body types benefit from physical activity. Even if you are out of shape or have not been active in a long time, you can begin activity safely.
- Aerobic activity should be in episodes of at least 10 minutes, and it is best to spread these out during the week.



- Aerobic activity (also called endurance activity) is when you move your body's large muscles in a rhythmic manner for a sustained period of time and your heart beats faster than usual.
- Muscle strengthening activity causes your body's muscles to work or hold against an applied force or weight. This includes resistance training and lifting weights. Resistance can be generated using elastic bands, handheld weights or body weight. The effects of muscle-strengthening activity are limited to the muscles doing the work.
- Strengthening activities should be performed on at least 2 non-consecutive days each week and should target all the major muscle groups: legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms.
- Stretching can produce the following benefits: increased flexibility, improved joint range of motion, improved circulation, and stress relief. How often should a person stretch? Generally, it is best to stretch when engaging in physical activity. For those who are not active on a regular basis, stretching at least three times per week to maintain flexibility is a good starting point.

## Message Delivery by Clinical Staff:

### During Face to Face Encounters:

- Discuss during routine primary care encounters.
- Discuss during any clinical or patient education encounter (individual or group, in-person, virtual, or by telephone) if information is requested.
- Discuss and review results of the VHA online Health Risk Assessment (under development) during a clinical visit.

### At the Facility Level:

- Participate in medical center and national outreach events.
- Support mass media campaigns (posters, etc.) to increase general awareness, encourage physical activity, and inform Veterans of available VA resources.

## Important Considerations:

If a Veteran needs more intensive intervention in this area than the clinical staff member delivering the message is able to provide, the staff member should refer the Veteran to the appropriate clinical staff, clinic or program for further education or clinical care, following local referral/consult protocol.

**Clinical Staff Tools:** *(Staff may also benefit by reviewing the Veteran Tools listed in the next section).*

- Healthy lifestyle coaching and TEACH training, available at your facility
- MOVE! and NCP Intranet website
- MOVE! and NCP SharePoint
- National outreach events



- Monthly NCP conference calls second Tuesday of each month at 1:00pm EST VANTS 800-767-1750 access 18987
- Local multidisciplinary Health Promotion Disease Prevention committee
- On-line VHA Health Risk Appraisal (under development)
- US Department of Health and Human Services [www.healthfinder.gov](http://www.healthfinder.gov)\*
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality:  
[www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstf07/methods/tfmethods.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstf07/methods/tfmethods.htm)\*  
[www.ahrq.gov/clinic/ivideos.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/ivideos.htm)\*
- The Guide to Community Preventive Services: [www.thecommunityguide.org](http://www.thecommunityguide.org)\*

### **Veteran Tools:**

- Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans: [www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines)\*
- Healthfinder: A Guide to Reliable Health Information on Physical Activity and Other Topics, HHS: [www.healthfinder.gov](http://www.healthfinder.gov)\*
- President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition (PCFSN), HHS:  
[www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov)\*
- The President's Challenge: [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org)\*
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HHS:  
[www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity](http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity)\*
- Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, HHS:  
[www.odphp.osophs.dhhs.gov](http://www.odphp.osophs.dhhs.gov)\*
- Healthfinder: Get Active  
<http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=22>\*

\* Indicates that the link leads to a non-VA website. The VA is not responsible for the content that is on the site.

### **Supporting Information:**

#### **Definitions:**

- The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans: Designed to provide information and guidance on the types and amounts of physical activity that provide substantial health benefits for Americans aged 6 years and older. The main idea behind the Guidelines is that regular physical activity over months and years can produce long-term health benefits.
- Moderate intensity: The body is working at a moderate intensity when one can talk but not sing. Moderate-intensity physical activity includes things like walking fast, dancing, and raking leaves.
- Strengthening activity: Any activity that works a specific muscle or muscle group and results in increasing the strength of that muscle/muscle group. Examples of strengthening activities are lifting weights (e.g. chest presses, leg presses, biceps curls, triceps extensions) or using your body weight as the resistance (e.g. push-ups, sit-ups, squats, pull-ups).



- Vigorous intensity: The body is working at a vigorous intensity when one can't say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. Vigorous-intensity physical activity includes things like jogging, jumping rope, swimming laps, or riding a bike uphill.
- Aerobic activity (also called endurance activity): When the body's large muscles move in a rhythmic manner for a sustained period of time and cause a person's heart to beat faster than usual. Aerobic activity should be in episodes of at least 10 minutes and it is best to spread it out during the week.

### **Evidence and/or Guidelines:**

- The *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* is considered a major resource for physical activity and recommends: For important health benefits, adults should do at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) each week of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes (1¼ hours) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both.
- Regular physical activity has been associated with decreased risk of developing depression, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, stroke and certain kinds of cancer.<sup>1-8</sup>

### **VHA Guidance:**

- VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines for Screening and Management of Overweight and Obesity (section addressing Physical Activity)  
[http://www.healthquality.va.gov/obesity/obe06\\_final1.pdf](http://www.healthquality.va.gov/obesity/obe06_final1.pdf)

### **VHA Program Office Stakeholders:**

- National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- Primary Care Services
- Office of Nursing Services
- Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service

### **VHA Content Experts:**

- National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service

### **Source Documents:**

1. The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.  
<http://www.health.gov/paguidelines>.
2. HHS. Healthfinder: A Quick Guide to Reliable Information on Healthy Eating and Other Topics. <http://www.healthfinder.gov>.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - Physical Activity website.  
<http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity>.
4. Office of Women's Health - How to be Active for Health.  
<http://www.womenshealth.gov/FitnessNutrition/Stayingactive>.



5. The Community Guide - Promoting Physical Activity.  
<http://www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/index.html>.
6. Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to prevent Obesity in the United States website.  
[http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5807a1.htm?s\\_cid=rr5807a1\\_e\\*](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5807a1.htm?s_cid=rr5807a1_e*).
7. Physical Activity Counseling I Statement.  
<http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/uspsphys.htm>.
8. Behavioral Counseling in Primary Care to Promote a Healthy Diet website.  
<http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstf/uspsdiet.htm#related>.

