



# ON CALL

Lay Community Health Advisors

# Physical activity in different age groups

## Introduction

This short handbook will provide you with some additional information about the importance of physical activity in different age groups and benefits coming from exercising in a right way in different periods of life.

This handbook will be useful in promoting positive mental health with members of your local health network. Thanks to reading this handbook you will be aware how to choose the best kind of exercise for your age.

## No matter what age you are, it is the right age to start

It is never too early or too late to start caring about your health, and being physically active is one of the best ways to prevent many diseases, and stay in a good health and shape.

Along with technological development people had become more lazy. Nowadays we have constant access to every information we need and different types of entertainment – without the need to leave our house. Kids and teens spend more and more time sitting, instead of running around, playing and teaming up for

organized games. Adults live more faster and busier life than they used to not so far ago, and trying to balance work and home, doesn't always find time to take care of themselves. When it comes to frequency of doing some physical activity, the only positive tendency can nowadays be seen among older people.

We need to move a lot in every age. Kids need to use some of enormous amount of energy they naturally have, by being physical active. It is crucial for their development. Young people, who struggle about many issues like having friends, finding partner, getting to the good university, finding a well-paid job, and getting their life together in general, need exercises to relieve stress and minimize the risk of depression. Adults need to train in order to maintain strong, healthy and in a good shape for longer, and have less health problems when they get older. Older people need to exercise so they can keep straight posture and stay in a good health.

Even if training throughout whole life would bring best results, it is never too late to start regular exercising. It will improve your immunity and health condition, as well as mental state.

## Physical activity of children

Kids are more energetic than adults from nature and frequent physical activity like running, jumping, dancing etc, is crucial to their proper, physical and psychological, development.

On the one hand, kids, being very energetic and curious, are moving around and playing a lot without the need to remind them to do so. On the other hand, nowadays kids tend to spend more and more time sitting or laying down looking at screens of their phones, tablets or notebooks.

In order to develop well and stay healthy they need at least one hour of physical activity per day, and this can be easily done just by playing or doing chores. The best thing a parent can do to improve his baby' immunity and overall health condition, strengthen his kid' bones and muscles, improve memory and overall brain function, prevent obesity and boost his/her confidence, is to make sure that she or he gets enough physical activity daily.

Kids' competitive nature and desire to do their best may be really helpful while encouraging them to move a bit more. Kids' sport activities should be interesting and fun in order to encourage them to keep being active. Even if it takes a bit of effort to keep coming up with interesting

sport activities, doing different kind of exercises daily helps kids to develop well, and it's worth every effort we put to keep them away from screens.

## Physical activity of teens

Same as it is with kids, reducing screen time and increasing time of physical activity can do miracles for physical and mental health of a teenager.

In order to keep developing well, teens need as much active time daily as kids – about one hour, and half an hour is a must.

Moreover, being physically active can help teens a bit with all kind of pressures they are facing at this age – rising hormone levels, peer pressure to be fit and masculine, social pressure to be cool and have a lot of friends (group sports). It is also a great stress and frustration reliever.

Last, but not least exercises help to prevent and to fight depression, as it:

- Rises levels of serotonin – the hormone of happiness,
- Realises endorphins
- Lowers level of cortisol – hormone of stress
- Boosts self-esteem

## Physical activity of adults

Often it is really hard to find time for exercising while working full time, taking care of a kids and a house, and trying to balance work and home life. Fortunately adults doesn't need to spend as much time on physical activity as children and kids – about 2,5 to 3 hours a week is enough to help them living healthier lifestyle.

The main threat to active lifestyle when it comes to adults is resigning from walking a lot, and getting to different destinations throughout a day not by foot or bicycle, driving car or using public transport.

Just a 30minutes of training a day can help adults deal better with everyday life stress – including stressing job, problems at home etc.

Being physically active helps adults to stay in a good health for longer. As we grow up and then start growing old, our body changes. If we won't work to stay in a good shape our bones and muscles will weaken, our chances to stay in a good physical and mental shape until late age will decrease.

Even if for a lot of people adulthood can be the busiest time of their life, exercising a bit at that age can do more good than harm.

## Physical activity of older people

Exercising helps older people to stay in a good health and to keep a straight posture for longer. At this age, preventing diseases and maintaining independence in movement for as long as it is possible becomes the main reason to stay physically active.

Nowadays older people are more physically active than they were not so long ago. Some kind of sports – like nording walking – had become really popular among older people. Spending more time outside, exercising and breathing fresh air, helps older people to maintain good health, straight posture, energy and good mood.

Moreover exercising, even just half an hour a day, in that age results in:

- lowering rates of all-cause mortality, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, type 2 diabetes or colon cancer and breast cancer,
- having muscular fitness and healthier body mass
- lowering risk of falling, and better cognitive function;
- reducing risk of any kind of functional limitations

## How to use this Resource with your Local Health Group?

This handbook presents information on the topic of physical activity in different age groups. It helps us understand how exercising right to our age can benefit us in different periods of life.

Reviewing this handbook before each session with the group will help you to lead a discussion about the topic. In the resources you will also find a PowerPoint presentation which will help you to explain the topic to your group and start a conversation with them.

### Group Activity

After you have shared the digital resource and the PowerPoint presentation with your group, you can start a group discussion asking all group members to think how their own physical activity had changed as they aged.

Ask them to answer following questions:

- What sport did you like to play as a teenager?
  - How do you exercise now?
  - Are you planning to be active when you get older? In what way?
- Once they are finished, ask them to divide into four groups and write down up to 10 examples of physical activities (with short description), right for age group of their choice. Remember that each group needs to choose different age group (kids, teenagers, adults, seniors). If you want to make this exercising more interesting you may ask each group to write one activity, and pass their sheet to next group. Make 10 rounds, read each list out loud and ask group to chose most interesting activity from each list.
- What was your favourite outside activity when you were a kid?





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