

Pacific Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Everyone



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Contributors

This document builds on the *Pacific Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults*, published by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2008, and has been adapted primarily from the *WHO Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour* and the *Guidelines on Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour and Sleep for Children under 5 Years of Age*.

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Background

Physical activity is critical to human health. Regular physical activity helps to prevent and manage a variety of health conditions, improves mood and sleep, boosts energy, and supports healthy ageing. Adopting a healthy lifestyle that includes regular physical activity is one of the most important things that people can do to improve health and well-being.

Globally, one in four adults and four in five adolescents do not meet the global recommendations for physical activity (1). Physical inactivity is one of the four leading risk factors for the growing global burden of obesity and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Each year, 4 to 5 million deaths could be averted if these recommendations were met globally.

In addition to inadequate physical activity, excessive sedentary behaviour such as sitting and watching screens is a risk factor for poor health (2).

The world continues to change and modernize in ways that reduce both the need and opportunity to be physically active. Modernization and mechanization made lives easier for the production of goods and getting places. Now, electronics make work and learning easier and more accessible. These advancements have benefits. However, they also create challenges to achieving adequate physical activity and often promote inactivity.

Globally, NCD rates are increasing, with inadequate physical activity being one of the major contributors, along with unhealthy diets, tobacco use and harmful use of alcohol. *The Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018–2030: More Active People for a Healthier World* identifies strategies that can be taken to support more active people (3).

In the Pacific, the NCD crisis is well known. Pacific island countries and areas have been working hard to tackle the burden of NCDs and their risk factors, especially since the adoption of the NCD Roadmap by the Joint Forum Economic and Pacific Health Ministers in 2014 (4).

These guidelines include recommendations for the minimum necessary levels of physical activity and recommendations for reducing sedentary behaviour in order to improve health outcomes. More is better.

The Pacific Guidelines provide the recommended minimum amount and types of physical activity for health for different age groups. For adults, benefits across a variety of health outcomes will be gained from doing at least 150–300 minutes of physical activity per week (1). It is well noted that there are additional health benefits to be gained by engaging in higher levels of physical activity. Of course, those who participate in extreme levels of activity or competitive sports should take appropriate measures to prevent injuries.

In the Pacific island countries and areas, like the rest of the world, many adults are not meeting the minimum levels of physical activity required for good health (Fig. 1). It is worrisome, however, that children and adolescents are less active than adults (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2), as many lifelong lifestyle habits are developed early in life.

Fig. 1. Prevalence of insufficient physical activity among adults aged 18 and older, by sex and by country, 2016^a

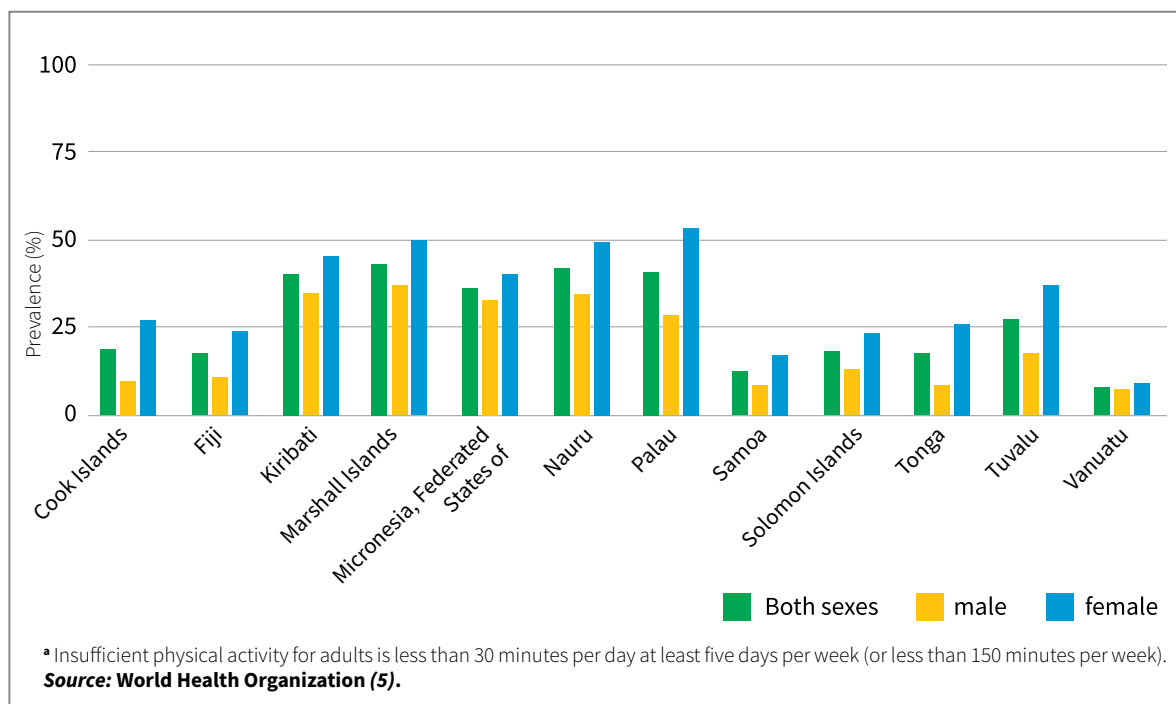
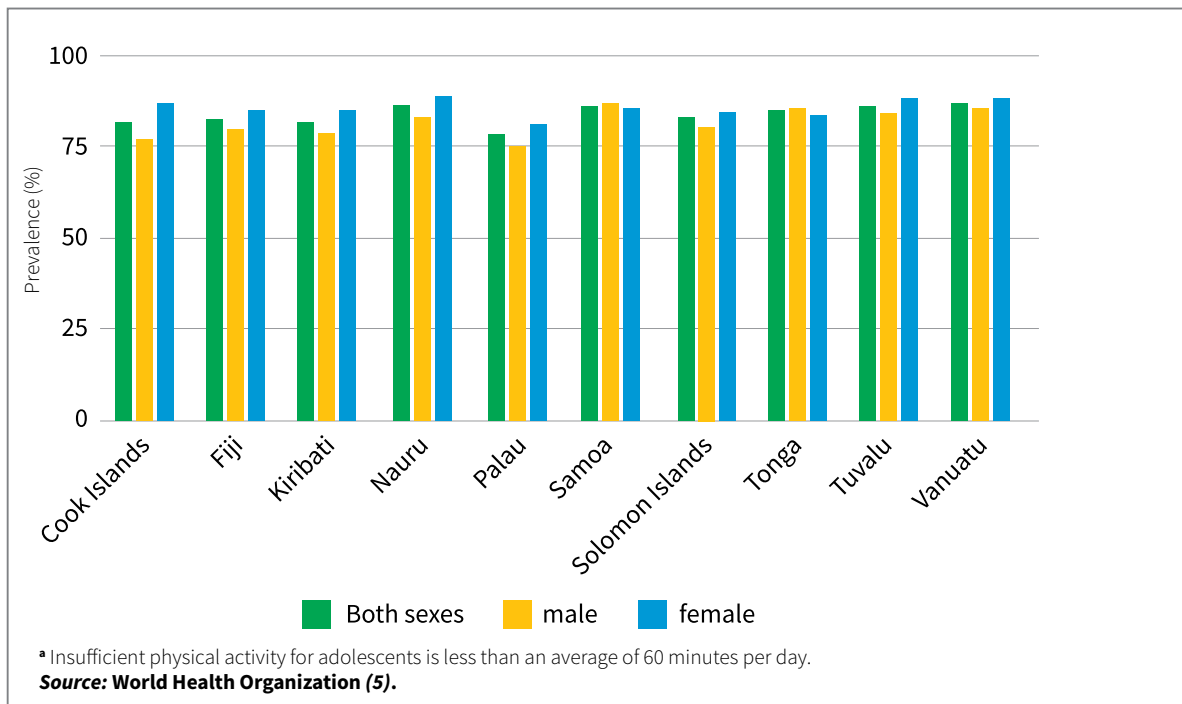
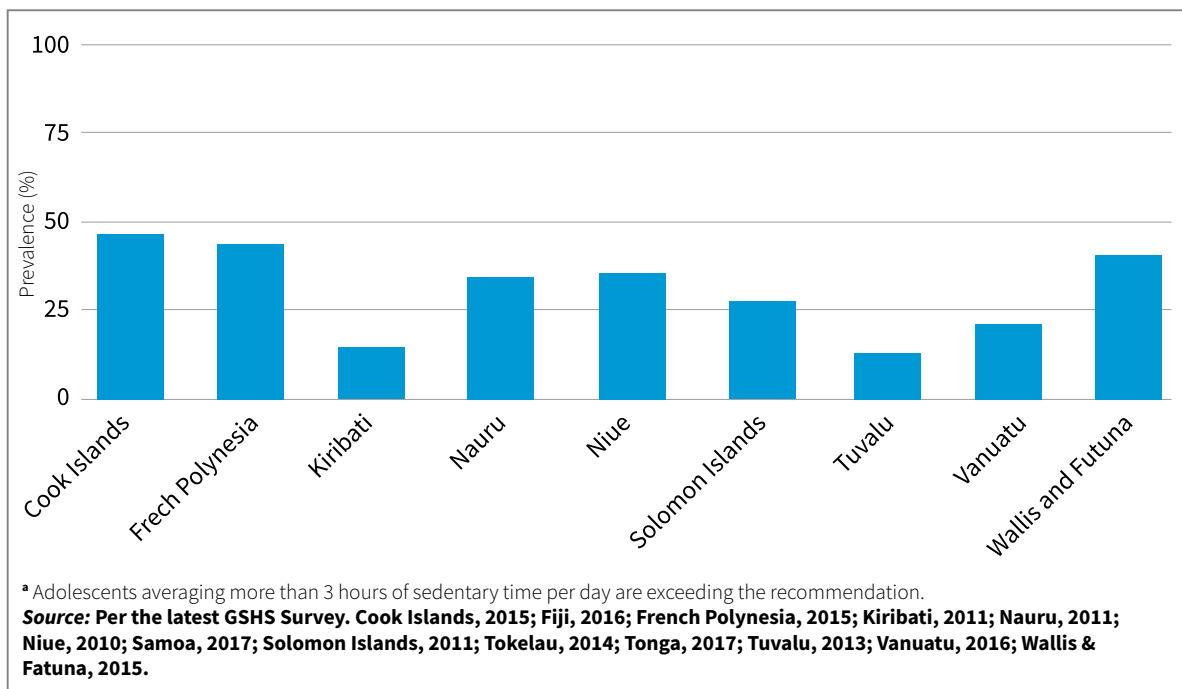


Fig. 2. Prevalence of insufficient physical activity among adolescents aged 11–17, by sex and by country, 2016^a**Fig. 3. Percentage of adolescents exceeding the recommended sedentary time, by country, 2016^a**

The Pacific Guidelines are updated on evolving evidence across all age groups, abilities and conditions.

The process used to update the Pacific Guidelines included:

- a Pacific technical working group;
- field-testing in Pacific island countries and areas;
- focus group discussions; and
- verification by global experts that this Pacific adaptation continued to maintain fidelity to the evidence.



Purpose

This document is an adaptation of WHO global guidelines for physical activity and sedentary behaviour (1,2). It was developed for health-care providers and workers and for decision-makers in the Pacific island countries and areas. This document is foundational and can serve as the basis for health education as well as for policy and environmental changes that can support increased physical activity towards improving population health and preventing NCDs.

The Pacific Guidelines are based on the recently updated global guidelines published by WHO at the end of 2020. WHO completed a robust review of the scientific evidence and global consultations to provide these updates (1).

The WHO guidelines provide recommendations based on the latest evidence. The recent guidelines from New Zealand and Australia reached similar conclusions (6,7). In developing these new guidelines, the previous *Pacific Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults* (8), developed by WHO in 2008, have been considered. Pacific island countries and areas are encouraged to adopt or adapt these guidelines as is best suited to promote physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour.

While the global recommendations are based in minimum minutes per week, for these Pacific Guidelines, the minimum recommendations are stated in minutes per day. This adaptation aims to make the guidelines easier for the general public to understand and implement.

Glossary

Aerobic physical activity	Activity in which the body's large muscles move in a rhythmic manner for a sustained period of time. Aerobic activity is also called endurance activity and improves cardiorespiratory fitness. Examples are walking, swimming, running and biking.
Anaerobic physical activity	Activity that consists of brief, intense bursts of exercise where oxygen demand surpasses oxygen supply. Examples are weightlifting and sprints.
Balance training	Static and dynamic exercises that are designed to improve an individual's ability to withstand challenges from postural sway or destabilizing stimuli caused by self-motion, the environment or other objectives. Examples include mountain pose, tree pose and Warrior III in yoga practice.
Bone-strengthening activity	Bone-strengthening activities produce an impact or tension force on the bone that promotes bone growth and strength. Examples include running, jumping rope and lifting weights.
Cardiometabolic health	The relationship between blood pressure, blood lipids, blood sugar and insulin and the effect on health.
Cardiorespiratory fitness (endurance)	A health-related component of physical fitness. The ability of the circulatory and respiratory systems to supply oxygen during sustained physical activity.
Cognitive function	Cerebral activities such as reasoning, memory, attention and language that leads to gaining information and knowledge—this includes learning.
Disability	An umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions.
Exercise	A subcategory of physical activity that is planned, structured, repetitive and purposive with the aim of improving physical fitness.
Fitness	A measure of the body's ability to function efficiently and effectively in work and leisure activities, and includes for example, physical fitness and cardiorespiratory fitness.
Flexibility	A health- and performance-related component of physical fitness that is the range of motion possible at a joint.
Functional exercises	Exercises that can be imbedded into everyday tasks to improve lower-body strength, balance and motor performance. Examples include tandem and one-leg stands, squatting, chair stands, toes raises and stepping over obstacles.
Household physical activity	Physical activity undertaken in the home for domestic duties such as cleaning, gardening and caring for children.
Leisure physical activity	Activity performed at the discretion of the individual and is not an essential activity of daily living. Examples includes games, sports, traditional dancing and recreational walking.
Light- or low-intensity physical activity	Incidental activity that does not result in a substantial increase in heart rate or breathing rate such as slow walking.

Major muscle groups	Includes the legs, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms.
Moderate-intensity physical activity	Occurs when an individual experiences some increase in breathing or heart rate during physical activity. However, it should still be possible to carry on a normal conversation (but not singing). Examples include walking briskly, gardening, dancing, swimming, bicycling and scrubbing floors.
Muscle-strengthening activity	Physical activity and exercise that increase skeletal muscle strength, power, endurance and mass such as resistance training or weight training.
Multi-component physical activity	Multi-component physical activity is important for older adults to improve physical function and decrease the risks of falls. Generally, these would combine all types of exercise including aerobic, muscle strengthening and balance strengthening.
Occupational/work physical activity	Physical activity performed for work such as cleaning houses, doing yardwork or carrying boxes.
Physical activity	Any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure.
Physical inactivity	An insufficient amount of physical activity to meet recommendations to maintain health.
Recreational screen time	Time spent watching screens including TV, computers and mobile devices that is not related to education or work.
Sedentary screen time	Time spent watching screens including TV, computers and mobile devices. Does not include active screen-based games.
Sedentary behaviour	Any waking behaviour that requires less than 1.5 MET of energy expenditure such as sitting, reclining or lying. Most desk-based work or driving is sedentary. Any low-movement behaviours such as sitting and watching TV.
Sport	A wide range of activities performed within a set of rules and undertaken as a leisure or competitive activity.
Transport physical activity	Physical activity performed for the purposes of getting to and from places such as walking, cycling or use of non-motorized locomotion.
Vigorous- or high-intensity physical activity	Occurs when an individual experiences a substantial increase in breathing or heart rate while doing a physical activity. It should not be possible to carry on a normal conversation. Examples include jogging and running, rowing and canoeing, shovelling dirt or gravel and bicycling uphill.

Key messages

Physical activity is good for hearts, bodies and minds. Regular physical activity can prevent and help manage NCDs. Physical activity can also reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, and enhance thinking, learning and overall well-being.

Any amount of physical activity is better than none, and more is better. For health and well-being, get at least 30-60 minutes of moderate aerobic physical activity on at least five days of the week for all adults, and an average of 60 minutes of moderate aerobic physical activity per day for children and adolescents.

It is not too late to start! If you are not physically active (moving much), start small and gradually increase until you can meet the recommendations.

All physical activity counts. Physical activity can be done as part of work, sport, leisure, transport and household tasks. Be active every day in as many ways as you can, your way!

Muscle-strengthening activity benefits everyone. Older adults must add physical activities that emphasize balance and coordination, as well as muscle strengthening, to help prevent falls and improve health.

Too much sedentary behaviour can be unhealthy. Even low-intensity activity is better than sitting still.

Everyone can benefit from moving more.



Physical activity guidelines

Physical activity is moving your body whether for recreation, work, activities of daily living, or getting places. Sedentary behaviour is lack of movement or minimal movement.

These guidelines provide recommendations on the amounts and types of physical activity for people based on stage of life and/or health conditions to achieve health and fitness. Maintaining fitness as we age is important to be able to continue activities of daily living.

ACTIVITY TYPE	DESCRIPTIONS	EXAMPLES
Low-intensity aerobic activity	You can talk or sing.	A slow walk, washing dishes, sitting while fishing or playing an instrument.
Moderate-intensity aerobic activity	You can carry on a conversation.	Walking briskly, jogging, pushing a wheelbarrow, leisurely cycling, heavy cleaning such as washing windows or floors, playing badminton, tennis or other sports.
High-intensity aerobic activity	You may have difficulty talking.	Hiking, jogging, shovelling, carrying heavy items, fast cycling, fast swimming, dancing, playing basketball, soccer or singles tennis.
Bone-strengthening activity	Any weight-bearing activity is bone-strengthening.	Walking, hiking, traditional dancing, tennis, walking, gardening and yoga.
Muscle-strengthening activity	Weight training or resistance.	Resistance bands, push-ups, pull-ups, sit-ups, walking, taking the stairs, swimming or carrying heavy loads to the market. Remember to use all your muscle groups.
Stretching	Stretching is when muscles are intentionally stretched to improve the muscles elasticity.	Stretching exercises.
Multi-component	Doing a variety of these activities to maintain function, balance, agility and flexibility in order to prevent falls and injuries and maintain quality of life.	A variety of activities to improve all areas of fitness. For example, walking, lifting weights and yoga.

INTENSITY: ■ Low ■ Moderate ■ Vigorous ■ Bone ■ Muscle ■ Stretching ■ Multi-component



Guidelines for children under 5

01

Physical activity is critical to health and development. Young children should have opportunities to participate in a range of developmentally appropriate, safe and enjoyable play-based activities each day.

GOALS



Under 1 year

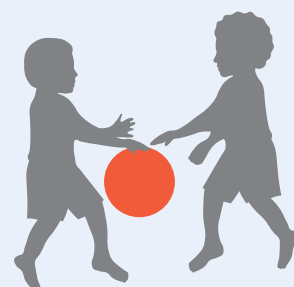
At least **30 mins** throughout the day of floor-based play (tummy time). Less than one hour restrained in a swing or car seat.

Age 1-2 years

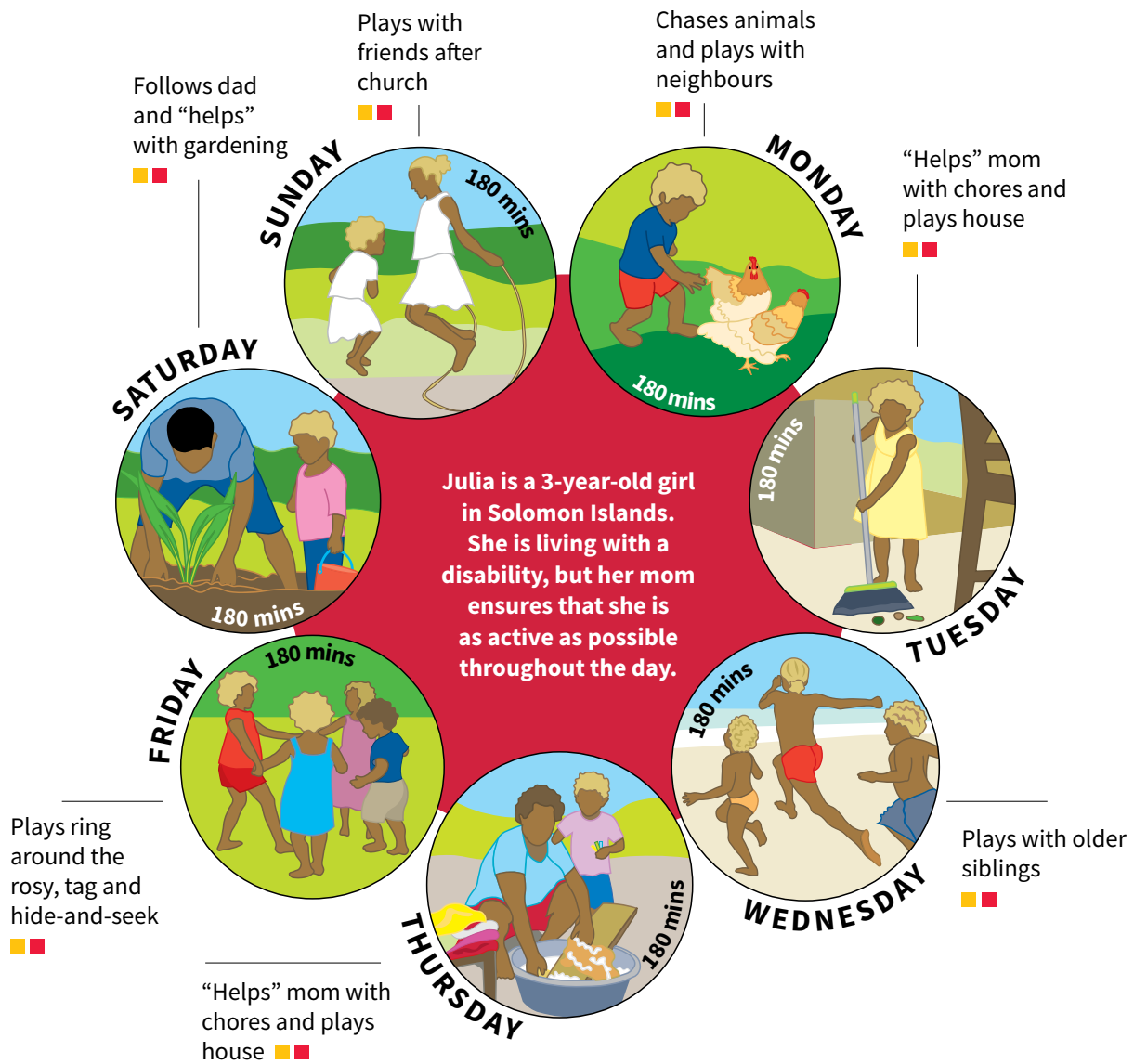
A variety of active play including moderate to vigorous activity. At least **180 mins** spread throughout the day. **More is better.**

Age 3-4 years

A variety of active play including moderate to vigorous activity. At least **180 mins** spread throughout the day with at least **60 mins** being moderate to vigorous. **More is better.**



INTENSITY: ■ Low ■ Moderate ■ Vigorous ■ Bone ■ Muscle ■ Stretching ■ Multi-component



RECOMMENDATIONS

SLEEP TIME - DURING A 24-HOUR PERIOD

Children under 1 should have 14–17 hours of good-quality sleep, including naps, when they are 0–3 months of age and 12–16 hours when they are 4–11 months of age.

Children 1–2 years of age should have 11–14 hours of good-quality sleep, including naps, with regular sleep and wake-up times.

Children 3–4 years of age should have 10–13 hours of good-quality sleep, which may include a nap, with regular sleep and wake-up times.

Screen time is not recommended for children under 1; less than 60 minutes for children aged 1-4.



Guidelines for children and adolescents aged 5–17, including children with disabilities

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02

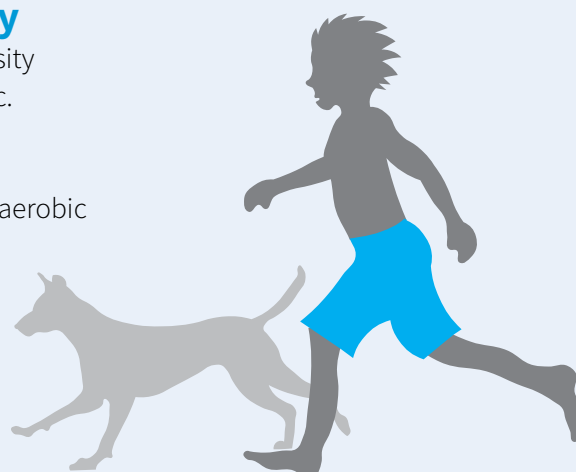
Physical activity for children and adolescents improves physical fitness, heart health, bone health, and contributes to learning, mental health and weight management.

GOALS

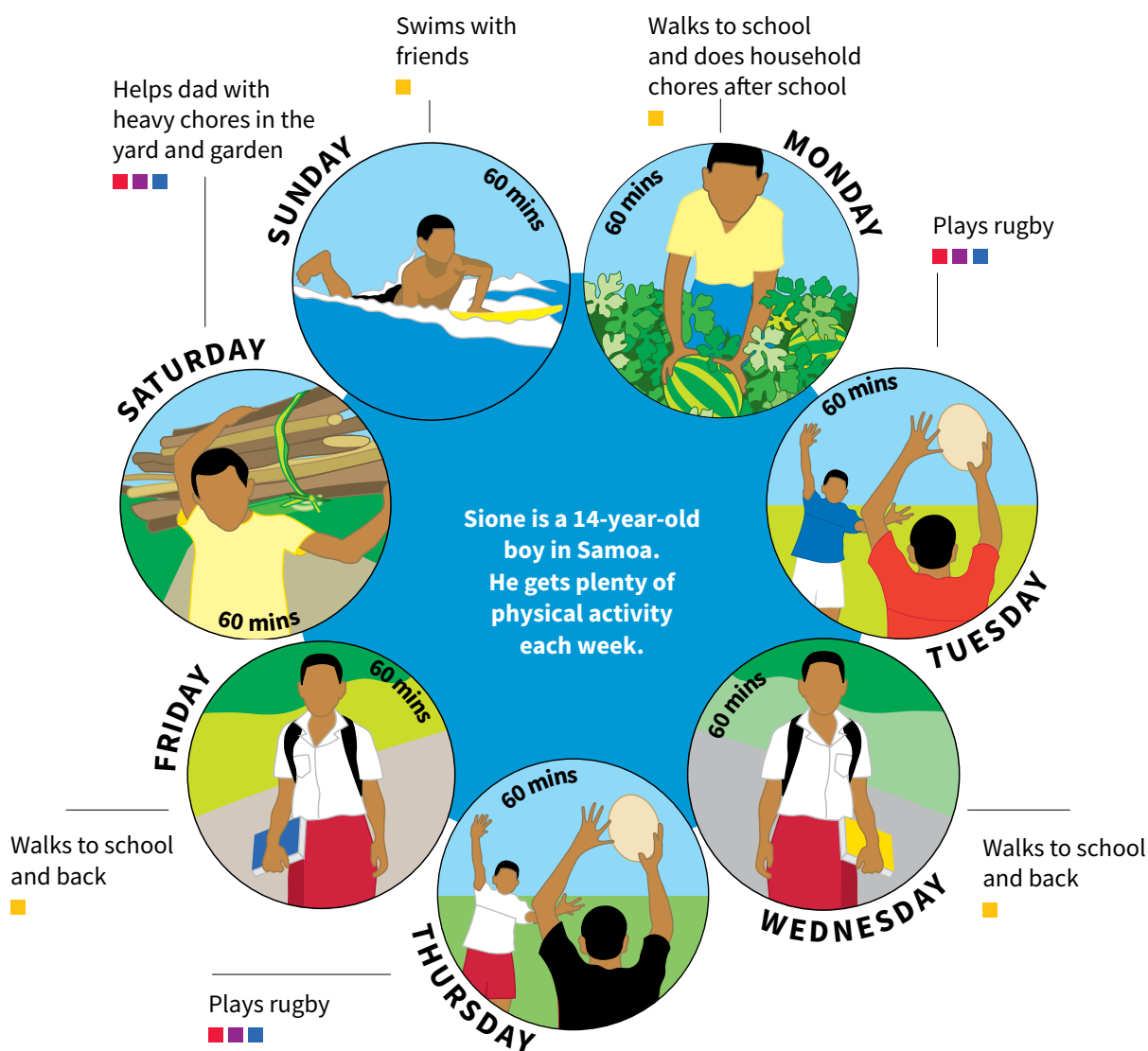


At least **60 mins per day** of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity, mostly aerobic.

On at least **3 days** a week, add vigorous-intensity aerobic activities as well as those that strengthen muscles and bones.



INTENSITY: ■ Low ■ Moderate ■ Vigorous ■ Bone ■ Muscle ■ Stretching ■ Multi-component



RECOMMENDATIONS

- If you cannot do much, do something!
- If you are not doing anything, start small and gradually increase until you can meet the recommendations.
- Children with chronic diseases and disabilities may need to consult with a physical activity specialist or health-care professional for advice on the types and amounts of activity appropriate for them. Additional equipment or support may be required for people with disabilities.

More is better.

- Limit sedentary time, especially sedentary screen time.



Guidelines for adults aged 18–64, including those with disabilities and chronic diseases

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03

For healthy adults, and those living with chronic diseases or disabilities, physical activity can lengthen life and prevent or help manage heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and some cancers. It also improves mental health, cognitive health, sleep and can help weight management. All adults should be active 150 to 300 minutes per week (unless there is a medical reason not to) for substantial health benefits.

GOALS

At least **30 mins** of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity

OR

15 mins per day of high-intensity aerobic physical activity
at least 5 days per week.

For additional health benefits, adults should also do muscle-strengthening activities at a moderate or greater intensity that involves all major muscle groups on **2 or more days** per week.



INTENSITY: ■ Low ■ Moderate ■ Vigorous ■ Bone ■ Muscle ■ Stretching ■ Multi-component



RECOMMENDATIONS

- If you cannot do much, do something!
- If you are not doing anything, start small and gradually increase.
- No matter your age, weight or health condition, it is important to be regularly active.
- Adults with chronic diseases and disabilities may need to consult with a physical activity specialist or health-care professional for advice on the types and amounts of activity appropriate for them. Additional equipment or support may be required for people with disabilities.
- Limit time being sedentary. Replace with any activity, even light intensity.



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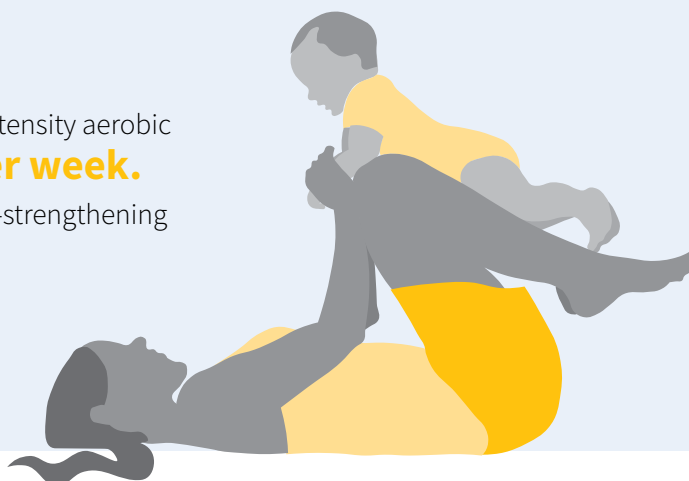
Guidelines for pregnant and postpartum women

04

Regular physical activity during pregnancy and postpartum provides benefits for both the mother and the baby including reduced risk of pre-eclampsia, gestational hypertension, gestational diabetes, excessive weight gain, delivery complications, postpartum depression and fewer newborn complications. Unless there is a medical reason to limit physical activity, it is recommended that pregnant and postpartum women regularly participate in physical activity to achieve 150 minutes per week.

GOALS

At least **30 mins** per day of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity **at least 5 days per week.** Incorporate a variety of aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities.



INTENSITY: ■ Low ■ Moderate ■ Vigorous ■ Bone ■ Muscle ■ Stretching ■ Multi-component



RECOMMENDATIONS

- If you cannot do much, do something!
- If you are not doing anything, start small and gradually increase until you can meet the recommendations.
 - Women who were physically active before pregnancy can continue these activities.
 - Pelvic floor exercises maintain muscle tone, open the pelvis, help with flexibility in the lower back and aid in recovery after delivery. This may prevent urinary incontinence due to stretching of the pelvic floor muscles in pregnancy and delivery.
- Women with chronic diseases, disabilities or high-risk pregnancies may need to consult with a physical activity specialist or health-care professional for advice on the types and amounts of activity appropriate for them. Additional equipment or support may be required for people with disabilities.
 - Limit your time being sedentary. Replace with any activity, even light intensity.



Guidelines for older adults aged 65 and above, including those with disabilities and chronic diseases

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05

Physical activity for older adults can lengthen life and prevent or help manage heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and some cancers. It also improves mental health, cognitive health, sleep and can help weight management. Physical activity can also help prevent falls and injuries and help maintain functional abilities. All older adults should be active regularly when not contraindicated and as their functionality allows in order to accumulate 150–300 minutes of physical activity throughout the week.

GOALS

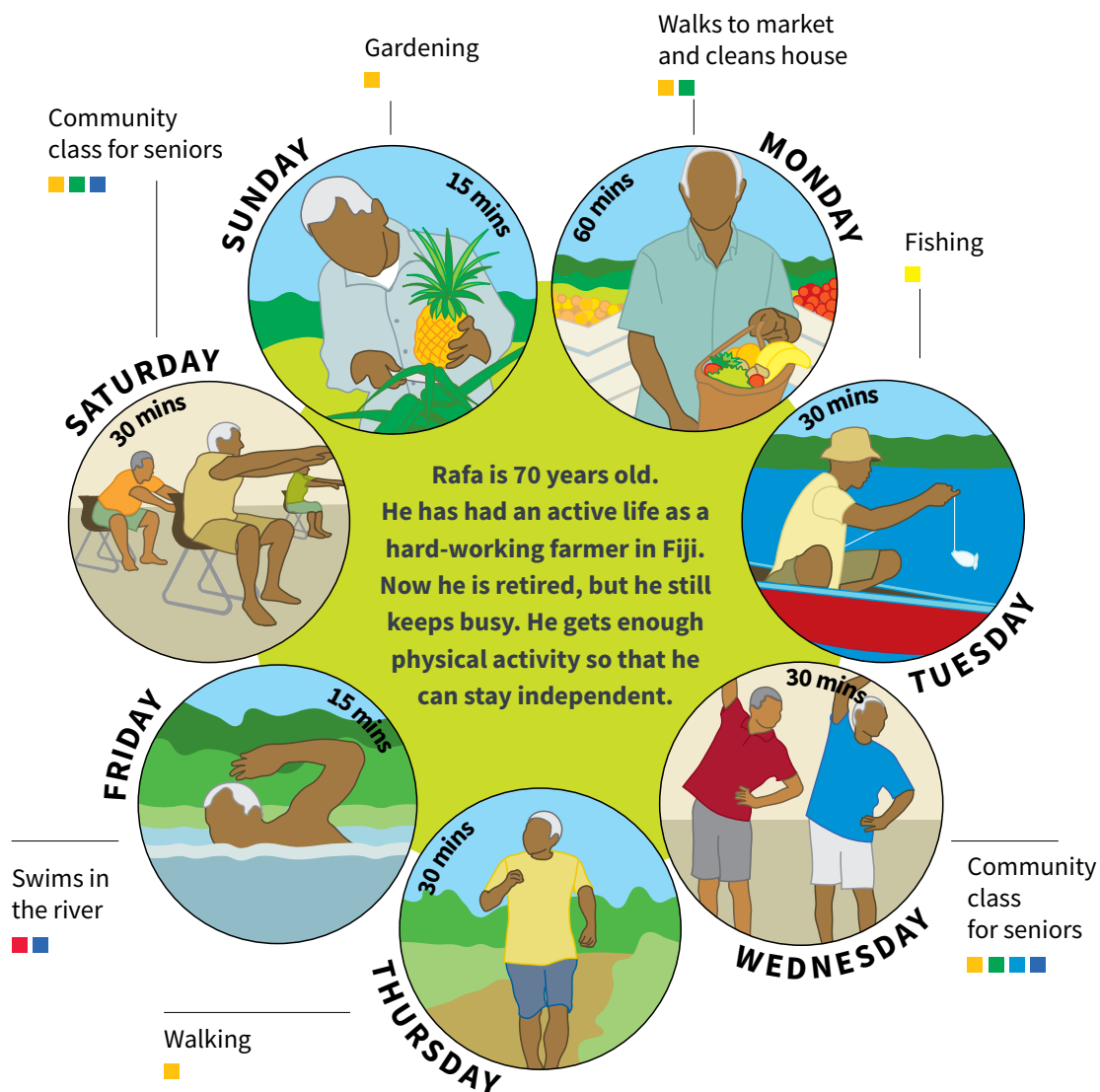
At least **30 mins** of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity
OR **15 mins** of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise **at least**
5 days per week.

Older adults should include a multi-component activity for balance and strength (all major muscle groups) at least **3 days** per week.

For additional health benefits, older adults should do moderate or vigorous muscle-strengthening activities that engage all major muscle groups on **2 or more days** per week.



INTENSITY: ■ Low ■ Moderate ■ Vigorous ■ Bone ■ Muscle ■ Stretching ■ Multi-component



RECOMMENDATIONS

- If you cannot do much, do something!
- If you are not doing anything, start small and gradually increase.
- No matter your age, weight or health condition, it is important to be regularly active.
- Adults with chronic diseases and disabilities may need to consult with a physical activity specialist or health-care professional for advice on the types and amounts of activity appropriate for them.
 - Additional equipment or support may be required for people with disabilities.
- Limit your time being sedentary. Replace with any activity, even light intensity.

Summary of recommended physical activity

Every Move Counts

Being active has significant health benefits for hearts, bodies and minds.



Limit screen time and
sedentary behaviour



Reduce long periods of sitting

CHILDREN UNDER 5

UNDER
1 YEAR
AT LEAST
30
MINUTES
PER DAY

Floor-based tummy time



AGE 1-4 YEARS
AT LEAST
180
MINUTES
PER DAY
Moderate- to vigorous-
intensity physical activity

CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

AT LEAST
60
MINUTES PER DAY

Moderate- to vigorous-intensity
physical activity

Include high-intensity
muscle strengthening
3 X WEEK



CHILDREN BENEFIT FROM LOTS OF ACTIVE PLAY.

Physical activities

**ADULTS
AGED
18-64**



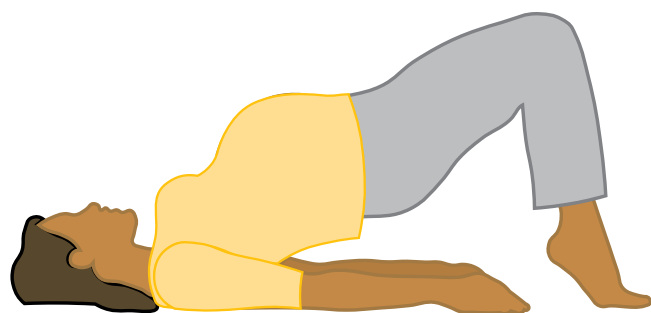
AT LEAST
30
MINUTES PER DAY
5 DAYS
PER WEEK
Moderate-intensity
aerobic physical
activity

Include strength
training
2 X WEEK

**PREGNANT &
POSTPARTUM WOMEN**

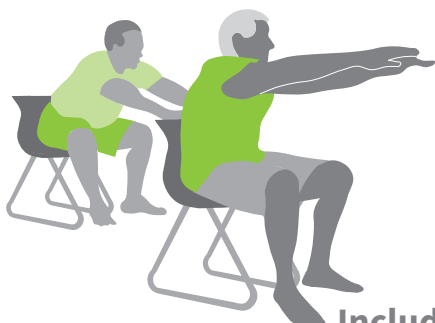
Moderate-intensity aerobic
physical activity including
muscle strengthening and
gentle stretching

AT LEAST
30 MINUTES PER
DAY 5 DAYS PER
WEEK



MORE TIME AND/OR INTENSITY HAS MORE HEALTH BENEFITS.

**OLDER ADULTS
AGED 65 AND ABOVE**



AT LEAST
30
MINUTES PER DAY
5 DAYS PER WEEK
Moderate- to high-intensity
aerobic physical activity

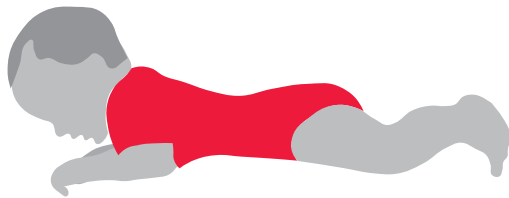
Include multi-component activity
3 X WEEK
and strength training
2 X WEEK



START SLOW AND ADAPT AS NEEDED.

Recommendations for sleep and s

CHILDREN UNDER 1 YEAR

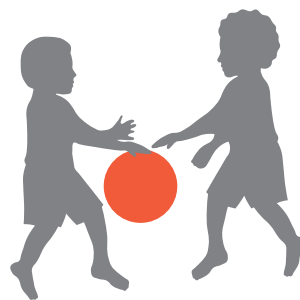


NO SCREEN TIME AND LESS THAN ONE HOUR RESTRAINED.

1-2 YEARS



good-quality sleep **with naps**
and a regular schedule

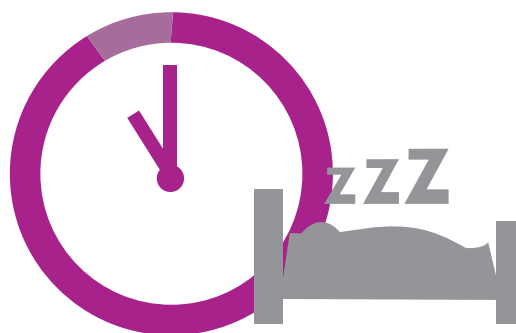
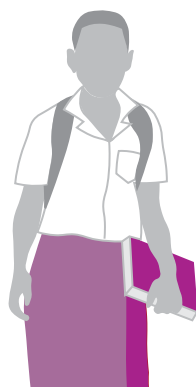


3-4 YEARS

LESS THAN 60 MINUTES OF SCREEN TIME.

Sedentary behaviours

5-17 YEARS



Adequate good-quality sleep

LIMIT SCREEN TIME, ESPECIALLY SEDENTARY SCREEN TIME.

ADULTS 18-64



Adequate good-quality sleep

ADULTS 65 AND ABOVE



Adequate good-quality sleep



LIMIT TIME BEING SEDENTARY. REPLACE WITH ANY ACTIVITY, EVEN LIGHT INTENSITY.

Safety considerations

Physical activity is important to health. However, consideration should be given to current activity levels and health to avoid injuries or harms.

Avoiding injury



- Start slow and build up the time and intensity of activity.
- Warm up and cool down.
When doing a moderate- to vigorous-intensity workout, begin at a light to moderate intensity for the first few minutes. After the activity, cool down by returning to light-intensity activity for the last few minutes of activity.
- Wear reflective clothing when walking at night.
- Dress appropriately for the weather including proper footwear, hats, sunscreen and insect repellent.
- Participate in vigorous outdoor activity in the morning or evening instead of the mid-day sun.
- Stay hydrated. Drink water.
- Find a safe environment to do physical activity.



- Don't stretch muscles until they are warm.
- Avoid overstretching, especially bouncing.

Medical issues

Most of the time, increasing physical activity is beneficial and advised. Occasionally, certain medical conditions or risks can be increased by physical activity, especially an abrupt start to vigorous activity.

Adults and older adults with chronic conditions (such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes) may wish to consult with their health professional for advice on types and amounts of activity appropriate for their individual needs, abilities and functional limitations. Pre-exercise medical clearance is generally not necessary for those without contraindications before beginning light- or moderate-intensity physical activity that doesn't exceed the demands of brisk walking or everyday living.

If you are increasing your physical activity and you feel dizzy or short of breath, you may need to slow down and build up more gradually.

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