

Austrian Physical Activity Recommendations – Key Messages

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Children of kindergarten age with and without physical, sensory or mental disabilities

The following recommendations apply to children from kindergarten age (from 3 years up to the start of school), regardless of gender, ethnicity and physical, sensory or mental disabilities.

Children of kindergarten age should be physically active on a daily basis, which should be encouraged by parents and other adult caregivers.

Children of kindergarten age should be **physically active for at least 3 hours a day**. The period of time can be spread over the day. Of these daily 3 hours of physical activity, **at least 60 minutes (1 hour) should be of moderate to vigorous intensity**.

Enjoyment of physical activity, age-appropriate types of activities as well as a variety of motor tasks should be taken into account.

Long-term sitting should be avoided or repeatedly interrupted by physical activity.

Children and adolescents with and without physical, sensory or mental disabilities

The recommendations apply to children and adolescents from the age of 6 to 18 years, regardless of gender, ethnicity and physical, sensory or mental disabilities.

It is important to provide young people opportunities and encouragement to participate in physical activities on a daily basis.

Children and adolescents should do **60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity a day**. To promote endurance, most of the daily 60 minutes of physical activity should be done with either a moderate or vigorous intensity. **Vigorous-intensity physical activity is recommended on 3 days a week**.

As part of the daily 60 minutes of physical activity, **muscle- and bone-strengthening activities are recommended on at least 3 days of the week**.

Enjoyment of physical activity, age-appropriate types of activities as well as a variety of motor tasks should be taken into account.

Long-term sitting should be avoided or repeatedly interrupted by physical activity.

Adults

with and without physical, sensory or mental disabilities

The physical activity recommendations apply to adults from 18 to 65 years, regardless of gender, ethnicity, and physical, sensory or mental disabilities.

Adults should be physically active on a regular basis. In particular, **the change from “physically inactive” to “some physical activity” is an important first step.**

In order to promote and maintain substantial health benefits

→ adults should do **muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days of the week**, involving all major muscle groups.

→ adults should do **at least 150 (2 ½ hours) to 300 minutes (5 hours) per week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity.**

or

75 (1 ¼ hours) to 150 minutes (2 ½ hours) a week of vigorous-intensity physical activity.

or

an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity.

Additional health benefits are gained by engaging in physical activity beyond the equivalent of 300 minutes of physical activity a week, where moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity can be again combined.

Long-term sitting should be avoided or repeatedly interrupted by physical activity.

Older adults

with and without physical, sensory or mental disabilities

The recommendations apply to adults over 65 years who do not have a contraindication with respect to physical activity, regardless of gender, ethnicity and physical, sensory or mental disabilities.

In case of health restrictions, the recommendations should be individually adapted, depending on the ability of the individual to move and the specific health risks. Promoting regular physical activity is particularly important for older adults because they are the least physically active when compared to other age groups.

Older adults should be physically active on a regular basis. In particular, **the change from “physically inactive” to “some physical activity” is an important first step.**

In order to promote and maintain substantial health benefits

→ older adults should do **muscle-strengthening exercises on 2 or more days of the week**, involving all major muscle groups.

→ older adults should do **at least 150 (2 ½ hours) to 300 minutes (5 hours) per week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity.**

or

75 (1 ¼ hours) to 150 minutes (2 ½ hours) a week of vigorous-intensity physical activity.

or

an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity.

Additional health benefits are gained by engaging in physical activity beyond the equivalent of 300 minutes of physical activity a week, where moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity can be again combined.

The weekly physical activity behaviour should include a **variety of motor tasks, including activities to improve strength, endurance, mobility and balance.**

Older adults should adopt the intensity and extent of physical activity behaviour that their condition and abilities allow.

Long-term sitting should be avoided or repeatedly interrupted by physical activity.

Women during and after pregnancy

The recommendations apply to healthy women during an uncomplicated pregnancy, regardless of whether they were regularly physically active before pregnancy or physically inactive. In addition, recommendations for women following spontaneous births are also provided.

Recommendations for women during an uncomplicated pregnancy

Women who have not been physically active on a regular basis before pregnancy should take advantage of every opportunity to become physically active. In particular, the change **from “physically inactive” to “some physical activity” is an important first step.**

For the development, maintenance and blood circulation of the muscles, **daily pelvic floor training is recommended. Additional muscle-strengthening exercises are recommended on 2 or more days a week.** Emphasis must be placed on continuous breathing throughout the exercise.

In order to promote and maintain health, **at least 150 minutes (2 ½ hours) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week** is recommended.

Women who were active before pregnancy, and who exceed this recommendation, can continue their usual physical activity behaviour and sports activities, as long as they feel comfortable. If necessary, the type and technique can be adapted and the duration or intensity can be reduced.

Long-term sitting should be avoided or repeatedly interrupted by physical activity.

Recommendations for healthy women after spontaneous birth

Guided, targeted pelvic floor training should be started by all women immediately after childbirth and continued for up to 6 months.

From 4 to 6 weeks after childbirth, it is recommended that **physical activity is extended gradually until the recommended physical activity for adults is again reached**. These recommendations are:

- adults should perform **muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days of the week**, involving all major muscle groups.
- adults should do **at least 150 (2 1/2 hours) to 300 minutes (5 hours) per week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity**.
- long-term sitting should be avoided or repeatedly interrupted by physical activity.

Adults with chronic health conditions

The recommendations apply to adults with chronic physical or mental diseases, such as type 2 diabetes mellitus, cancer, depressive disorders, hip and knee arthrosis, clinically stable ischaemic diseases, chronic back pain or after a stroke. These recommendations apply only if the health status is stable.

Adults with chronic disease are advised to be physically active on a regular basis. In particular, **the change from “physically inactive” to “some physical activity” is an important first step**.

In order to promote and maintain substantial health benefits

- adults should perform **muscle-strengthening exercises on 2 or more days of the week**, involving all major muscle groups.
- adults should do **at least 150 (2 ½ hours) to 300 minutes (5 hours) per week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity**.
- or**
75 (1 ¼ hours) to 150 minutes (2 ½ hours) a week of vigorous-intensity physical activity.
- or**
an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity.

Additional health benefits are gained by engaging in physical activity beyond the equivalent of 300 minutes of physical activity a week, where moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity can be again combined.

If individuals are unable to implement these recommendations due to their chronic disease, they should nevertheless **be physically active as far as possible and avoid physical inactivity**.

Long-term sitting should be avoided or repeatedly interrupted by physical activity.

Safe physical activity

The health benefit of regular physical activity is greater than the risk of injury or other health damage.

Individual physical activity, individual choice. It is recommended that forms of physical activities or sports are chosen that correspond to the current fitness level. When choosing the type of physical activity, it is advisable to take into account that the risk of injury in some forms of physical activities is lower than in others.

Move appropriate and safely. For inactive people who want to be more physically active, it is recommended that they start with a low intensity. If it is planned to increase the amount of physical activity, the frequency and duration of the activity should be increased first, followed by the intensity.

Proper equipment and preparation. Adequate equipment must be used, depending on the type of physical activity or sports. It is recommended that physical activity should only take place in a safe environment. Rules should be respected, and reasonable and responsible choices regarding time, place and type of physical activity should be made.

In the case of **chronic health conditions** (e.g. heart problems) or a significant increase or change in the exercise programme, it is recommended that medical advice should be sought. Adults and children with chronic health issues should clarify individual adaptations with their doctor or other health or physical activity professional.

