Build a Healthier Plate

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity and 75 minutes of vigorous intensity aerobic activity per week. Additionally, engaging in any physical activity is beneficial. Even more physical activity (up to 5+ hours/week) can increase your health benefits!

Questions or comments? Email us at weightloss@ku.edu or call toll free (866) 962-1788.

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From the Director

Successful environmental control is proactively making additive and subtractive changes to your environment to manage your health. There are several ways to monitor your exercise intensity level. Here are a couple of examples.

How do I know if I am exercising at a moderate intensity level?

- Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE): 4-6
- Heart Rate: 60% to 70% of Max Heart Rate

What is my Max Heart Rate?

- For a 30 year old: 220 - 30 = 190
- For a 50 year old: 220 - 50 = 170
- For a 70 year old: 220 - 70 = 150
- For an 80 year old: 220 - 80 = 140

A 45 year old has a Max Heart Rate of 175 (220 - 45 = 175). To exercise in the moderate intensity range they should aim for a heart rate between 50% and 60% of Max Heart Rate, or 87.5 and 105 beats per minute. To estimate the amount of physical activity, they can use the following formula:

- $20 to $400
- $40 to $800

They can also manually feel their pulse on their neck or wrist and count the number of beats in 1 minute (or 30 seconds and multiply by 2!).

How do I know if I am exercising at a vigorous intensity level?

- Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE): 7-9
- Heart Rate: 70% to 90% of Max Heart Rate

The goal is to exercise at a level where you can still carry on a conversation but not comfortably.

Try these easy strategies to help you enjoy more fruits and vegetables throughout the day:

1. Place a bowl of colorful whole fruit where everyone can easily grab something for a snack (e.g., before the party, on the way to work, etc.).
2. Removing unnecessary triggers from your environment (i.e., high calorie foods or drinks).
3. Plan ahead (eat before the party, bring healthy snacks to the movies, etc.).
4. When you are exercising you can rate how hard you are working on a scale of 0 (too easy) to 10 (too hard) using the Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE). For moderate intensity, you should aim for a rating of around 4-6 and for vigorous intensity, around 7-9.

Try blanching vegetables to make them crisp and tender or combine them with fruits and vegetables, which are low in calories and high in fiber.

Try a smoothie with an HMR shake or low fat yogurt. A 6 oz smoothie with 1 HMR shake can provide a variety of essential nutrients.

Make a habit of adding fruit to your morning oatmeal, cereal or yogurt or make a fruit and granola bar. It's also a great way to add color, flavor and texture to your meals.

Environmental control is all about planning ahead so that temptation is not an issue. For example, if you are going to be at a party or other social situations, or even just hanging out at home (that ice cream in the fridge is calling your name), you can bring your own healthy snacks to avoid overeating.

Water is the best choice because it is calorie-free and helps keep you hydrated. If you think you may be tempted to drink something less healthy, you can plan ahead and bring a reusable water bottle or a glass of water. You can also use your water intake as an opportunity to engage in a physical activity program over the long term.

Try to incorporate at least one healthy behavior during weight maintenance. If you are not willing to engage in a physical activity program over the long term, you may consider other strategies to maintain your weight, such as maintaining a consistent pattern of eating, recording daily food intake, keeping a record of your physical activity, and attending meetings or other forms of social support.