

[IMAGE]

A Little Activity Goes a Long Way

By Editorial Staff

You're probably heard about the U.S. physical activity guidelines for adults: "For substantial health benefits, adults should do at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous intensity aerobic activity. ... adults should also do muscle-strengthening activities that are moderate or high intensity and involve all major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week, as these activities provide additional health benefits." But what about the guidelines for *older adults*?

As we age, physical activity becomes even more important, but can also be compromised by health complications, frailty, age-related muscle loss (sarcopenia) and other factors. Fortunately, the guidelines for seniors, as with adults, include this emphasis: Even light physical activity is better than none at all when it comes to health promotion. In fact, research suggests regularly engaging in light to moderate activity (e.g., walking for four hours a week) provides a major benefit to seniors: if they suffer a stroke, they're more likely to experience a mild version.

Published in *Neurology*, the study evaluated more than 900 elderly patients treated for strokes at a single hospital over a three-year period. Inactive seniors were far less likely to suffer only a mild stroke (74 percent) compared to seniors who regularly achieved light physical activity (86 percent) or moderate physical activity (90 percent). In other words, more than one in four inactive seniors suffered a more severe stroke, compared to only 14 percent of light exercisers and 10 percent of moderate exercisers. The researchers defined moderate exercise as activities such as swimming, running or walking briskly for at least two to three hours a week.

Remember, as we've said many times before in *To Your Health*, age is just a number. Physical activity is one of the best ways to keep your body and mind youthful as you age, and as this study suggests, even a little light to moderate physical activity can go a long way. Ask your doctor to outline an exercise program suitable for your age and health today.

Page printed from:

http://www.toyourhealth.com/mpacms/tyh/article.php?id=2568&no_paginate=true&no_b=true