



BALANCED CHOICES®

monthly nutrigram

The Exercise Message: More, More, More

When the 2005 Dietary Guidelines made their debut in January, there were gasps of disbelief when it came to the exercise recommendations: ninety minutes of exercise every day? Could they possibly be serious? The recommendations for adults as written in the *Executive Summary of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005* basically say:

- To reduce the risk of chronic diseases (like heart disease and diabetes) exercise moderately at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- If you need to lose weight, exercise for 60 minutes at a moderate to vigorous level on most days of the week.
- To maintain weight loss, exercise at least 60 to 90 minutes a day at a moderate to intense level.

Since the majority of people in the United States are trying either to lose weight or to prevent weight gain, the higher exercise levels have been the focus of media reports. And while these lofty exercise goals may be optimal for most us, they may be unattainable for many. So most people may need to take a “back to basics” approach:

- **Some is better than none.** If you are not exercising at all, then any amount of exercise is an improvement. If you are not active, talk to your doctor first to make sure that it is safe for you to exercise. Start slowly with a short 5 to 10 minute walk and add on the minutes as your fitness level increases.
- **Add it up.** Whether you exercise for 30 minutes all at once or exercise for 10 minutes three times a day, the weight loss should be the same. Add in as much activity during your day as possible by taking the stairs or walking during your work breaks.
- **Set goals.** The more specific and reasonable your goals are, the more likely you are to achieve them. When will you exercise? What activity will you choose? For how long will you exercise? Decide these things and write them down. Make sure your goals are reasonable – there’s nothing more motivating than a goal achieved!
- **Never give up.** There will always be times when you can’t, don’t, or won’t exercise. Most people fall into a rut every now and then. Always resolve to get back to it as soon as you can.
- **Have fun.** Choose activities that you like. If you’re a social person, then exercise classes or walking groups might be right for you. A nature lover? Plan weekend hikes in the mountains or state park. If you like learning new skills, then maybe a dance class is the way to go.

You don’t have to join a gym or buy expensive home exercise equipment to be active and healthy. The key to a more active life is to find what works for you.

To get more information in greater detail, go to:

<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/pdf/brochure.pdf>

Information Source: *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005*, Executive Summary. United States Department of Health and Human Services & the United States Department of Agriculture.

Jakicic JM, Winters C, Lang W, Wing RR. Effects of intermittent exercise and use of home exercise equipment on adherence, weight loss, and fitness in overweight women. *JAMA* 1999;282:1554-1560.