

Non-Communicable Diseases Watch



衛生防護中心
Centre for Health Protection



衛生署
Department of Health

FEBRUARY
2026



7.5 Million Reasons to Get Moving

Key Messages

- Physical activity can take place across daily settings including home, school, work, and the community. It can be part of leisure and recreation activities, play, active transportation through walking and cycling as well as household chores. Don't skip physical activity because it matters. Regardless of the amount of exercise, it can bring health benefits.
- Hong Kong has about 7.5 million residents, and everyone has their reason to get moving: for weight control, improved health and fitness, pleasure, illness prevention or treatment, stress or emotional relief, etc. The choice of activities can be tailored to individual interests, time, skills and health conditions.
- The habit of exercising usually develops gradually. Although there may be occasional setbacks in the process, with the right strategies everyone can find their own way to get active. Even the smallest changes can help build a healthier you!

Incorporating Physical Activity into Everyday Life

Physical activity refers to any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. It can take place across daily settings including home, school, work, and the community. The activities can be undertaken as part of leisure and recreation activities, play, active transportation through walking and cycling, as well as household chores¹. Based on the amount of physical effort and energy exerted, physical activities are generally categorised into three levels of intensity: low/light, moderate and high/vigorous. Regardless of intensity, any physical activity is associated with improved health and lower mortality risk². Studies have shown that regular physical activity helps prevent and control noncommunicable diseases,

such as “3Hs” (high blood pressure, high blood glucose and high blood lipids), heart disease, stroke, and some common cancers like colorectal cancer and breast cancer. It also supports weight management, boosts immunity and enhances mental health^{1,3}. While all types of physical activities are beneficial to health when performed safely, moderate- to vigorous-intensity exercises are particularly effective in enhancing cardiopulmonary fitness. Recent research also indicates that just 5 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity daily can reduce the risk of death⁴. Therefore, don't skip physical activity because it matters. No more waiting, get moving today and incorporate physical activity into everyday life.

Get active anytime, anywhere

Low/Light

Minimal impact on heart rate and breathing allows comfortable singing



- Step in place or do gentle stretching while watching television
- Go for a walk or stroll around the mall after lunch
- Get off the bus or train one or two stops early and walk the rest of the way
- Pace around while talking on the phone; stand up while folding laundry, ironing or performing other household chores

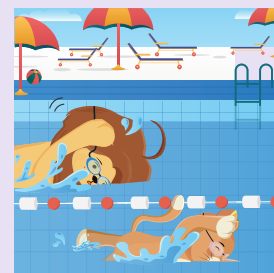


Moderate

Slightly increased heart rate and breathing allow conversation but not singing



- Climb stairs instead of take the lift or escalator
- Get off the bus or train one or two stops early and brisk walk the rest of the way
- Ride a bicycle slowly or go swimming during free time
- Do household chores like mopping floors or making beds



High/Vigorous

Marked increases in heart rate and breathing make conversation difficult

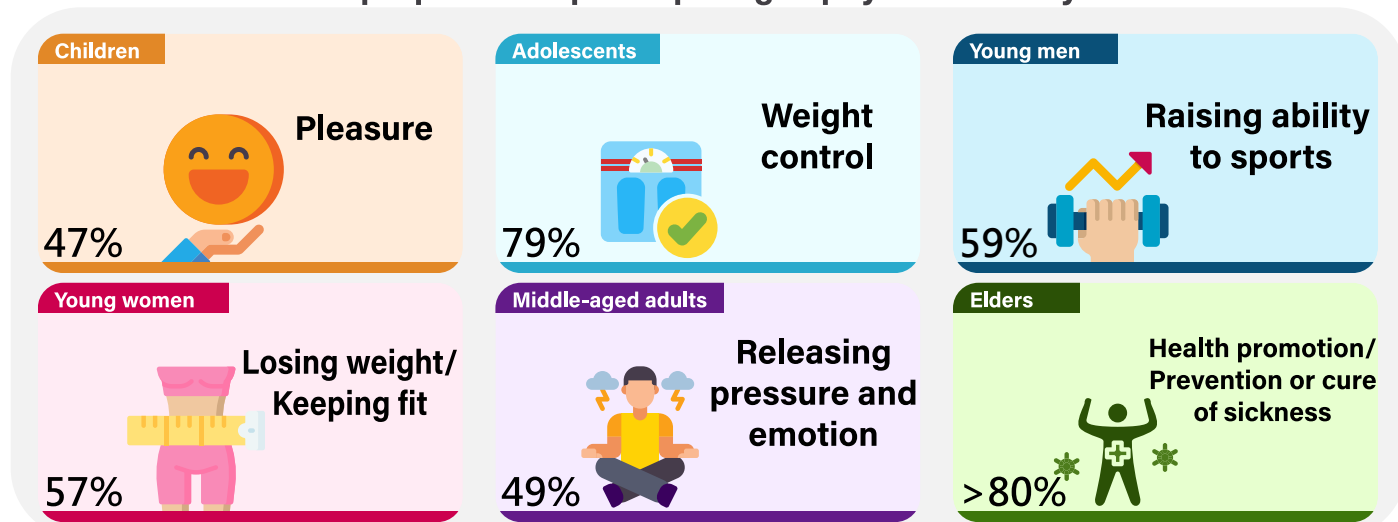


- Engage in jogging, running, aerobic dance, or play competitive sports like football or basketball



Overcoming Barriers, Every Extra Step is Progress

Common reasons or purposes for participating in physical activity⁵



It is well known that regular physical activity benefits health. Hong Kong has about 7.5 million residents, and everyone has a reason to get moving. A survey indicates that local residents participate in physical activities for weight control, improved health and fitness, pleasure, illness prevention or treatment, stress or emotional relief, etc⁵. However, 13.8% of adults aged 18 or above had insufficient aerobic physical activity as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO)⁶, though the prevalence⁷ had significantly dropped from 24.3% during the COVID-19 pandemic. Surveys also revealed that many local children and adolescents generally did

not engage in sufficient physical activity⁸. Over 90% primary and secondary students reported not meeting the recommended at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily⁹. For pre-school children, more than 70% of them engaged in less than 180 minutes of physical activity per day¹⁰. Of note, physical activity comes in many forms. With the right strategies, barriers to physical activity such as lack of time or being too busy, lack of energy or low motivation, lack of companionship or support, insufficient skills or resources, etc.^{7,11} can be overcome¹².

Individuals can choose activities that align with their interest, time, skills and health status

- ✓ Schedule 2-3 sessions of 10—15 minutes of exercise daily
 - Start with a small amount of exercise and build up gradually
 - Engage in physical activity when feeling energetic



- ✓ Invite family, friends, or colleagues to exercise together; join a physical activity challenge such as a walking challenge
 - Join an exercise group or take up a team sport



- ✓ Choose activities that are enjoyable and mix in new adventures, such as hiking, joining a fitness class or a dance class
 - Choose activities that require minimal skill and equipment, such as walking and climbing stairs; make good use of water bottles, books or towels for exercise
 - Look for free or low-cost options like local parks or walking trails, and community recreation and sports programs organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (www.lcsd.gov.hk/) and non-profit-making organisations

- ✓ Establish goals, move forward gradually, and reward yourself upon achievement



Get Moving, Build the Habit



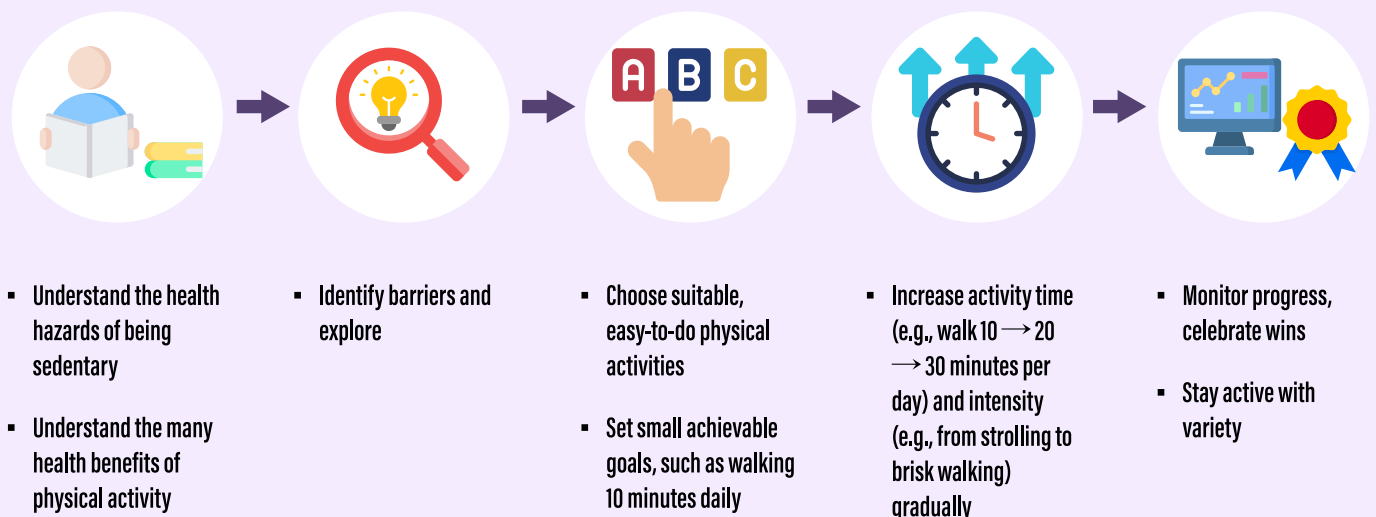
Developing a habit of regular physical activity usually involves a gradual progression¹³. It may require a few weeks or even months. On the journey to staying physically active, it is common to miss a workout or two, or even fall back into periods of inactivity. Do not get

disheartened but strive to identify the barriers, adjust the plan as needed, and find ways to get back on track. With consistency, even small changes can accumulate into significant results and pave the way for a healthy, active lifestyle.

From No Intention to Being Physically Active¹³



Suggestions and Actions



Physical Activity Recommendations Throughout the Life Course

For optimal health across the life course, the WHO^{14, 15} and the Department of Health of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Government)¹⁶⁻¹⁹ developed comprehensive physical activity guidelines tailored to different age and populations groups, advocating for habitual engagement in physical activity and highlighting that doing some physical activity is better than doing none. Reducing sedentary behaviour is also crucial for maintaining health at all ages. Replacing sedentary time with physical activity of any intensity including light-intensity would provide health benefits. If individuals, parents or carers have questions about physical activity recommendations for themselves or their children, they can consult qualified healthcare professionals for advice.

Parents and caregivers should recognise that regular physical activity is essential not only for children's physical growth and development, but also for their cognitive function and learning (please refer to NCD Watch July 2025 - Impact of Physical Activity on Growth, Cognition and Academic Performance in Children). Supporting children in cultivating healthy exercise habits from an early age is the most lasting and meaningful acts of care that parents and caregivers can offer. These habits often carry through adolescence and into adulthood, laying a strong foundation for lifelong physical health and mental well-being.

Infants and young children^{15, 16}



Infants less than 1 year of age

Include a variety of daily activities, particularly through interactive floor-based play. Let the infant lie prone for at least 30 minutes while awake

Young children at 1-2 years of age

Engage in at least 180 minutes of physical activity of varying types and intensities throughout the day; more is better

Young children at 3-6 years of age

Engage in at least 180 minutes of physical activity of varying types and intensities daily, including at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity, spread throughout the day; more is better

Adults, including those living with chronic conditions or disability^{14, 18}



Do at least 150–300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity, or 75–150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent amount of physical activity throughout the week

Engage in moderate- to vigorous-intensity muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week

Elders aged 65 and above

Also include physical activities that emphasis balance and strength training at moderate or higher intensity on 3 or more days a week to enhance functional capacity and prevent falls

Children and adolescents^{14, 17}



Do at least an average of 60 minutes per day of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity across the week

Engage in activities that strengthen muscles and bones at least 3 days a week

Pregnant and postpartum women without contraindications to physical activity^{14, 19}



Do regular physical activity throughout pregnancy and postpartum

Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity daily, building up to 150 minutes weekly

Include a mix of aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities; adding gentle stretching may also be beneficial

To shape children’s behaviour for more physical activities, parents and caregivers can lead by example through their own active lifestyles. At the same time, let children try a variety of age-appropriate and enjoyable physical activities and sports, and incorporate game-like elements to boost engagement and make physical activity more fun. Parents and caregivers can make use of the SmartSmart Parent’s Guide¹⁶ to create a healthy and supportive environment for young children to

develop habits of regular physical activity and healthy eating. For guidance on exercise tips for children and adolescents, please consult the pamphlet Exercise and Keep Fit¹⁷. The Government will continue to adopt a whole-of-society approach, striving to create an environment where physical activity is inclusive, affordable, and enjoyable for all. For more information about physical activity, please visit the Change for Health website at www.change4health.gov.hk.

Non-Communicable Diseases Watch
JULY 2025
Impact of Physical Activity on Growth, Cognition and Academic Performance in Children
Key Messages

- Children and adolescents aged 5-17 years should do an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate-to vigorous-intensity physical activity per day, such as walking, cycling, sports activities and active play.
- Physical activity participation not only supports children’s physical growth and development, reduces the risk of childhood obesity and associated chronic diseases, but also improves physiological and psychological conditions for maximising cognitive functioning, learning and academic success.



StartSmart Parents' Guide
幼登喜動校園
REVISED 2025



Exercise and Keep Fit
Exercise Tips for Children and Adolescents
 Edited by
 Department of Sports Science and Physical Education
 The Chinese University of Hong Kong
 Student Health Service
 Department of Health
 2025



A year's plan begins in spring.

Make a New Year's resolution to exercise more and embrace a healthier self!

Wishing you a happy New Year and good health!



References

1. Physical Activity (26 June 2024). Geneva:World Health Organization. Accessed 26 November 2025: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>.
2. Ekelund U, Tarp J, Steene-Johannessen J, et al. Dose-response associations between accelerometry measured physical activity and sedentary time and all cause mortality: Systematic review and harmonised meta-analysis. *British Medical Journal* 2019;366:l4570.
3. Health Benefits of Physical Activity for Adults (25 March 2024). U.S. Centers for Disease Prevention and Control. Accessed 26 November 2025: <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/health-benefits/adults.html>.
4. Ekelund U, Tarp J, Ding D, et al. Deaths potentially averted by small changes in physical activity and sedentary time: An individual participant data meta-analysis of prospective cohort studies. *Lancet* 2026;407(10526):339-349.
5. Territory-wide Physical Fitness Survey for the Community Hong Kong SAR; Leisure and Cultural Services Department Accessed 26 January 2026: https://www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/healthy/physical_fitness_test_2021/result.html.
6. Health Behaviour Survey 2023. Hong Kong SAR: Department of Health.
7. Population Health Survey 2020-22. Hong Kong SAR: Department of Health.
8. Huang WY, Wong SHS, Sit CHP, et al. Results from the Hong Kong's 2022 report card on physical activity for children and adolescents. *Journal of Exercise Science and Fitness* 2023;21(1):45-51.
9. Student Health Service. Annual Health Report for 2023/24 School Year. Hong Kong SAR: Department of Health, Student Health Service. Accessed 26 November 2025:https://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/english/annual_health/annual_health_report.html.
10. Physical Activity Guide For Kindergartens and Child Care Centres (Revised 2024). Hong Kong SAR: Department of Health. Accessed 26 November 2025: https://www.startsmart.gov.hk/files/pdf/physical_guide_en.pdf.
11. Deslippe AL, Soanes A, Bouchaud CC, et al. Barriers and facilitators to diet, physical activity and lifestyle behavior intervention adherence: A qualitative systematic review of the literature. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 2023;20(1):14.
12. Overcoming Barriers to Physical Activity (5 February 2025). U.S. Centers for Disease Prevention and Control. Accessed 26 November 2025: <https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/overcoming-barriers/index.html>.
13. Marcus BH, Pekmezi D. *Motivating People to Be Physically Active* (3rd Edition). Human Kinetics, 2024. Accessed 26 November 2025: <https://www.perlego.com/book/4532734/motivating-people-to-be-physically-active-pdf>.
14. WHO Guidelines on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2020.
15. Guidelines on Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour and Sleep for Children under 5 Years of Age. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2019. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2019.
16. StartSmart Parents's Guide (Revised 2025). Hong Kong SAR: Department of Health. Accessed 26 November 2025: https://www.startsmart.gov.hk/files/pdf/parent_guide_full_en.pdf.
17. Exercise and Keep Fit. Exercise Tips for Children and Adolescents (Revised in June 2025). Hong Kong SAR: Department of Sports Science and Physical Education of The Chinese University of Hong Kong and Student Health Service of the Department of Health. Accessed 26 November 2025: https://www.student-health.gov.hk/english/resources/resources_bl/files/tc_exercise_and_keep_fit.pdf.
18. A Guide to Physical Activity for the Elderly (Revised in November 2024). Hong Kong SAR: Elderly Health Service, Department of Health. Accessed 26 November 2025: https://www.elderly.gov.hk/english/educationand_media_resources/files/ham/A_guide_to_Physical_Activity_for_the_Elderly_EN_W3C.pdf.
19. Stay Fit and Active during Pregnancy. Hong Kong SAR: Family Health Service, Department of Health. Accessed 26 November 2025: https://www.fhs.gov.hk/english/mulit_med/000107.html.

World Obesity Day takes place on March 4 every year. Convened by the World Obesity Federation, it brings together individuals, organisations, and alliances to highlight the urgent need for understanding, prevention, and treatment of obesity.

This year, the campaign calls all 8 billion of us across the world to help change the story of obesity, with a particular focus on our most vulnerable communities: children.

The reason is simple. By 2035, half of the world's population—around 4 billion people—will live with overweight or obesity. Childhood obesity is rising rapidly, with rates of overweight and obesity among school-aged children increasing from 4% in 1975 to almost 20% in 2022. Obesity in childhood often continues into adulthood, increasing the risk of serious non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers. Concerningly, early signs of chronic conditions like heart disease are already appearing in children today.

Preventing and treating obesity will benefit every single one of us. That's why there are eight billion reasons to act on obesity, working together to create a world that prioritises early prevention, ensures access to proper treatment for those living with obesity and fosters healthier lives.

For more information about World Obesity Day, please visit the thematic website at www.worldobesityday.org/about-wod.



Editorial Board

Editor-in-Chief | Dr Anne CHEE

Members | Dr Patrick CHONG, Dr SK CHUANG, Dr Dominic LAU, Dr April LI
Dr CY LI, Dr Geeta SHARMA, Dr Kellie SO, Dr Tammy TAM, Dr Lilian WAN
Dr Carmen WONG, Mr Simon WONG

Production Assistants | Ms Cynthia CHEUNG, Mr KK FUNG, Mr Paul FUNG, Ms Sharon LAU,
Ms Nicole YUNG

Disclaimer

This publication is produced by the Non-communicable Disease Branch, Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, 18/F Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

All rights reserved

Please send all comments and/or questions to so_dp3@dh.gov.hk

Centre for Health Protection Website

www.chp.gov.hk