

Lower Your Blood Pressure ^{by}Being Active

Being physically active is one of the most important things you can do to prevent or control high blood pressure. It also helps to reduce your risk of heart disease.

It doesn't take a lot of effort to become physically active. All you need is 30 minutes of moderate-level physical activity on most days of the week. Examples of such activities are brisk walking, bicycling, raking leaves, and gardening. For more examples, see box 5.

box 5



EXAMPLES OF MODERATE-LEVEL PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

COMMON CHORES

Washing and waxing a car for 45-60 minutes

Washing windows or floors for 45-60 minutes

Gardening for 30-45 minutes

Wheeling self in wheelchair for 30-40 minutes

Pushing a stroller 1 1/2 miles in 30 minutes

Raking leaves for 30 minutes

Shoveling snow for 15 minutes

Stair walking for 15 minutes

SPORTING ACTIVITIES

Playing volleyball for 45-60 minutes

Playing touch football for 45 minutes

Walking 2 miles in 30 minutes (1 mile in 15 minutes)

Shooting baskets for 30 minutes

Bicycling 5 miles in 30 minutes

Dancing fast (social) for 30 minutes

Performing water aerobics for 30 minutes

Swimming laps for 20 minutes

Playing basketball for 15-20 minutes

Jumping rope for 15 minutes

Running 1 1/2 miles in 15 minutes (1 mile in 10 minutes)

You can even divide the 30 minutes into shorter periods of at least 10 minutes each. For instance: Use stairs instead of an elevator, get off a bus one or two stops early, or park your car at the far end of the lot at work. If you already engage in 30 minutes of moderate-level physical activity a day, you can get added benefits by doing more. Engage in a moderate-level activity for a longer period each day or engage in a more vigorous activity.

Most people don't need to see a doctor before they start a moderate-level physical activity. You should check first with your doctor if you have heart trouble or have had a heart attack, if you're over age 50 and are not used to moderate-level physical activity, if you have a family history of heart disease at an early age, or if you have any other serious health problem.