

Becoming Physically Active

HEALTHY BY CHOICE... NOT BY CHANCE



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: Measuring Physical Activity Intensity

To gain the health benefits of physical activity, it's important to make sure you are raising your heart rate slightly. Here are some ways to understand and measure the intensity of your physical activity.

Relative Intensity

The level of effort required by a person to do an activity is called intensity. When using relative intensity, people pay attention to how physical activity affects their heart rate and breathing.

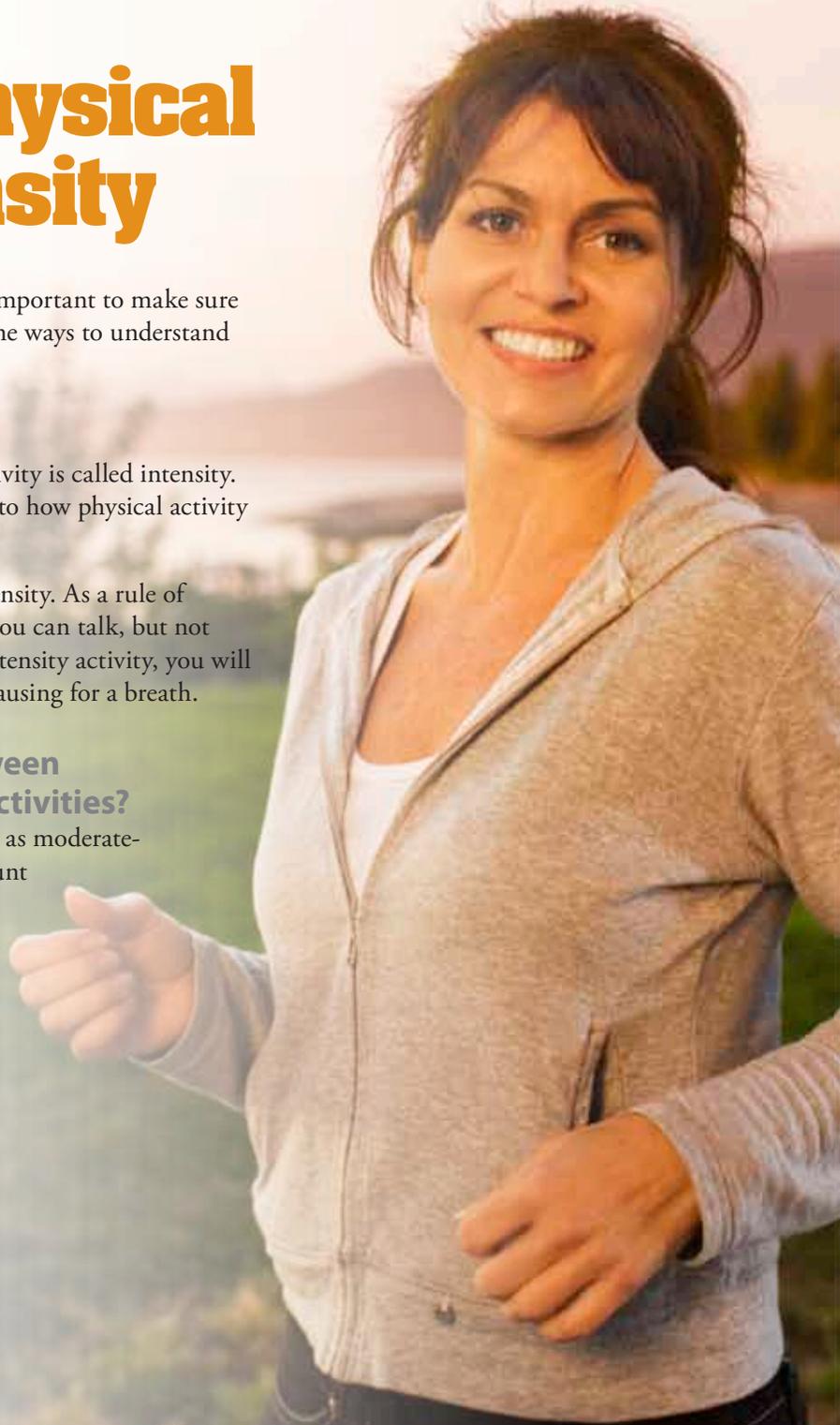
The talk test is a simple way to measure relative intensity. As a rule of thumb, if you're doing moderate-intensity activity you can talk, but not sing, during the activity. If you're doing vigorous-intensity activity, you will not be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.

How Do I Know The Difference Between Moderate And Vigorous Intensity Activities?

The table below lists examples of activities classified as moderate-intensity or vigorous-intensity based upon the amount of energy used by the body while doing the activity.

Moderate Intensity

- ⇒ Walking briskly (3 miles per hour or faster, but not race-walking)
- ⇒ Water aerobics
- ⇒ Bicycling slower than 10 miles per hour
- ⇒ Tennis (doubles)
- ⇒ Ballroom dancing
- ⇒ General gardening



Vigorous Intensity

- ⇒ Race walking, jogging, or running
- ⇒ Swimming laps
- ⇒ Tennis (singles)
- ⇒ Aerobic dancing
- ⇒ Bicycling 10 miles per hour or faster
- ⇒ Jumping rope
- ⇒ Heavy gardening (continuous digging or hoeing)
- ⇒ Hiking uphill or with a heavy backpack

Another Method Of Measuring Physical Activity Intensity

Target Heart Rate and Estimated Maximum Heart Rate

In addition to using the talk test, there is another way of monitoring physical activity intensity to determine whether a person's pulse or heart rate is within the target zone during physical activity and the method is known as estimating your target heart rate.

For moderate-intensity physical activity, a person's target heart rate should be 50 to 70% of his or her maximum heart rate. This maximum rate is based on the person's age. An estimate of a person's maximum age-related heart rate can be obtained by subtracting the person's age from 220. For example, for a 50-year-old person, the estimated maximum age-related heart rate would be calculated as $220 - 50 \text{ years} = 170 \text{ beats per minute (bpm)}$.

The 50% and 70% levels would be:

$$50\% \text{ level: } 170 \times 0.50 = 85 \text{ bpm, and}$$

$$70\% \text{ level: } 170 \times 0.70 = 119 \text{ bpm}$$

Thus, moderate-intensity physical activity for a 50-year-old person will require that the heart rate remains between 85 and 119 bpm during physical activity.

For vigorous-intensity physical activity, a person's target heart rate should be 70 to 85% of his or her maximum heart rate. To calculate this range, follow the same formula as used above, except change "50 and 70%" to "70 and 85%". For example, for a 35-year-old person, the estimated maximum age-related heart rate would be calculated as $220 - 35 \text{ years} = 185 \text{ beats per minute (bpm)}$. The 70% and 85% levels would be:

$$70\% \text{ level: } 185 \times 0.70 = 130 \text{ bpm, and}$$

$$85\% \text{ level: } 185 \times 0.85 = 157 \text{ bpm}$$

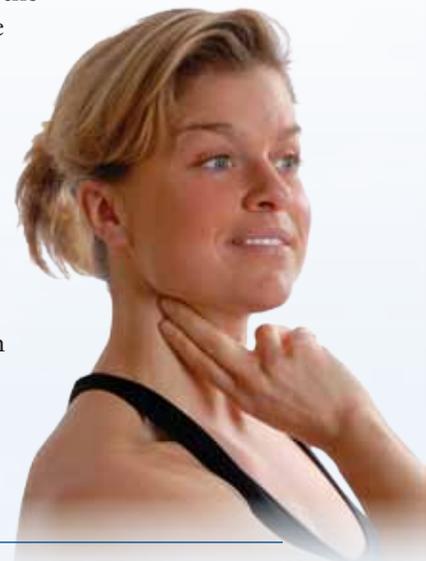
Thus, vigorous-intensity physical activity for a 35-year-old person will require that the heart rate remains between 130 and 157 bpm during physical activity.

Taking Your Heart Rate

Generally, to determine whether you are exercising within the heart rate target zone, you must stop exercising briefly to take your pulse. You can take the pulse at the neck, the wrist, or the chest. We recommend the wrist. You can feel the radial pulse on the artery of the wrist in line with the thumb. Place the tips of the index and middle fingers over the artery and press lightly. Do not use the thumb. Take a full 60-second count of the heartbeats, or take for 30 seconds and multiply by 2. Start the count on a beat, which is counted as "zero." If this number falls between 85 and 119 bpm in the case of the 50-year-old person, he or she is active within the target range for moderate-intensity activity.

A Final Note...

The key to reaping the benefits of physical activity is to stay free from injury. Always proceed slowly and carefully with any exercise plan. If you have any questions or concerns, be sure to contact a healthcare professional.



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 The Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) was established as a national not-for-profit organization in the mid 1980s through the efforts of a number of forward-thinking business and health leaders. Today, WELCOA has become one of the most respected resources for workplace wellness in America. With a membership in excess of 3,200 organizations, WELCOA is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of all working Americans. Located in America's heartland, WELCOA makes its national headquarters in one of America's healthiest business communities—Omaha, Nebraska.