

## Physical Activity for Kids, Pregnancy and Older Adults

This is the TD Fitness podcast with Coach T, episode number 82.

Welcome to the TD Fitness podcast, giving you ways to live a healthy lifestyle without giving up the things that make life worth living. And now your host, certified health coach and personal trainer Coach T.

Hey, hey guys, this is Coach T. Welcome back to the TD Fitness podcast. This is episode number 82 where we're talking about physical activity for kids, older adults and pregnancy. So last week we took a look at the physical activity guidelines for Americans, and we broke down the benefits and the considerations for adults from a physical activity perspective, right? Well this week we highlight some other important parts of the physical activity guidelines for Americans and address physical activity for kids, older adults, women in the pre and post natal stages. And then a couple of special cases, two that I'll mention towards the end. And as you know, I tend to focus on healthy living for busy individuals and busy lifestyles here on the TD Fitness podcast. And well, the tips for staying healthy as an adult with a busy schedule that's absolutely important. I also know that we're also concerned about our children, particularly given the fact that a lot of times what adds to our busy schedule is taking care of our children in some form or another.

So, that's what we're going to talk about here in this episode. And here's what I want you to walk away with. Physical activity is important, no matter your age or stage if you will. And though there are recommendations for what you "Should do," your goal should always just be to do a little bit better than you did yesterday or last week or last month or last year, because improvement over time will get you closer to those recommended amounts that these physical activity guidelines speak to. So let's dive right in and hit some of the benefits of physical activity for children and adolescents. And you'll find that there are some common themes here between the benefits of physical activity for adults and physical activity for children, quite frankly. But there are some things that are specific to kids.

So if you recall way back in episode number 17, that one was called for parents countering childhood obesity. So in episode 17, I talked about the importance of children being active, the standpoint of things your family values as a child and how that translates into adulthood. So that's the most important point here with activity for children. Not only is it a positive thing from a developmental standpoint, but as an active child, an active child has a higher likelihood of being an active adult. And that's important. You want to set that foundation and that groundwork early in life. Specifically though, between the ages of three and 17. So really from like a pre K age, all the way through the teen years, we see improved bone health and improved weight status just because of physical activity. And between the ages of six and 17, we'll see improved cardio-respiratory and muscular fitness and improve cardio metabolic health. And then between ages six and 13, so into the adolescent years, basically grade school years, we see improved cognition, which is important, right?

So we have some mental benefits here from physical activity, and a reduced risk of depression. And that is super important because you're probably tracking, there are often times that, you know, you'll see in the new younger adults and children suffering from depression and those types of things. So physical activity can actually help with that. And this is taken straight from the physical activity guidelines for Americans. It says that, "In addition to improving physical function, physical activity may improve cognitive function among youth and adults. Aspects of cognitive function that may be improved include memory, attention

and executive function." The ability to plan and organize basically, or to monitor, inhibit and facilitate behaviors, initiate tasks and control their emotions. And academic performance is enhanced as well, so some huge benefits here on the mental side from physical activity, particularly at a young age.

So there's something to it when we say, you know, go outside and expend some energy. I mean, that activity is necessary. It's a good release of energy that can lead to a better focus later on. You know, my wife and I have younger children, currently ages six and three, and it's important to us to get them outside and to make sure they are active throughout the day. And we're fortunate that their schools follow that same philosophy, that activity is important. So preschool age children, ages three to five years old should be physically active throughout the day to enhance growth and development. And when it comes to preschool age children, we should encourage that active play that includes a variety of activity types. And it's important provide young people those opportunities and encourage them to participate in physical activities that are appropriate for their age and that are enjoyable, because they're not going to do something or continue to do something if it's not enjoyable and that offer variety.

So for the younger ages, activity, variety and age appropriate activities are where you should absolutely focus and always, always, always try to make it fun. Sometimes, oftentimes this means actually letting them pick the activity and not focusing on your druthers, or your opinions of what they should be doing. Well, so the recommendation for adults, remember is two and a half hours a week of exercise, which is about 20 to 30 minutes a day. Children and adolescents, so ages six through 17 should actually, the recommendation is 60 minutes or more daily. Okay? It is that important and much of that time should be spent doing aerobic activity, or some kind of vigorous activity in there as well. And there should be some muscle and bone strengthening activity there to. Now, understand that what this is saying, it's not prescribing exercise plans for kids because that's not really appropriate at that age. Right?

So you don't have to get them a personal trainer or anything like that. You don't have to do that. Usually they can just get these activities, you know, the muscle and bone strength and the activity, the cardio from play at a young age or as they grow a little bit older, they get that through organized sports. Okay? Running, jumping rope, basketball, tennis, hopscotch, all of these are examples of bone strengthening activities that we talk about. And those bone strengthening activities can also be aerobic and muscle strengthening as well. You know, our six year old has gotten very good at the monkey bars over the course of the school year. And this is an example of a muscle strengthening exercise. So those are the types of things that I'm talking about. So healthy habits, this is an important point. Healthy habits that are instilled and practiced at a young age have a greater likelihood of sticking with us as adults.

That's really what I want you to take away from this physical activity for kids segment. Let them enjoy the activity, okay? And I do have some resources for you in the show notes. I'll include the link to some of these show notes, some of these resources that can help you navigate what's recommended for child and adolescent activity. There are two in specifically, there's one for kids, to help them understand how to get enough physical activity. It has tips and information designed for kids. I'll link to that in the show notes. And then one for parents as well to help us understand kinds of activity kids and teens need to stay healthy, and it offers tips for helping the kids to get active as well or to become active. So that's it for kids. Okay? And we're going to swing our focus now from early in life to later in life and talk about some of the benefits of physical activity and the key guidelines, if you will, for older adults.

So again, many of the benefits are the same ones you heard in episode number 81, when we talked about adult physical activity guidelines. Some of those benefits include a lower risk of what we call all cause mortality, lower risk of cardiovascular disease, cardio, I'm sorry, hypertension, type two diabetes, cancers, improved quality of life, lower anxiety levels,

reduced risk of depression, better sleep. Slowed or reduced weight gain and actually weight loss as well. And prevention of weight, regaining the weight after losing weight. So all of these are benefits of physical activity, but I'd like to call your attention to a few others that are even more important as older adults. And those include improved bone health because as we age, if we stay sedentary, if we don't continue to move, then our bones can become brittle and in the event of a fall it would be much easier for those bones to break.

And we want to protect against that, physical activity helps to make your, not just your muscles stronger but your bones stronger as well. Also, improved physical function as we age. You don't have to be up in age to know that things become more difficult as you age. I mean I'm 44, and I can't do the things that I could do at 23 as easily now. But staying active slows that process. We talked about how improved cognition is a benefit for kids when it comes to physical activity. And this is absolutely true in older populations as well. Reduces the risk of dementia including Alzheimer's disease. And my wife will tell you that this is the one that scares me the most when it comes to aging. I've seen it affect family members and loved ones, and it is hard, but physical activity helps with memory and thinking and can reduce your risk of dementia.

And then I spoke about falls a minute or so ago. Not only does physical activity make your bones and muscles stronger, but it can improve your balance and your reaction and lower the risk of falls in older adults. So you get a lower risk of falls, and a lower risk of fall related injuries. And then you have the additional health benefits related to brain health and fall related injuries and so forth. So those are some the benefits, excuse me, of physical activity as we age. I'll tell you too, that physical activity improves physical function among individuals of all ages, right? And really enables us to conduct our daily lives with energy and without undue fatigue. And this is particularly true, again for older adults who improve physical function reduces, like I said, reduces the risk of falls. But it's also important to understand that those normal activities of daily life will be enhanced and made easier just because we exercise or take part in physical activity regularly.

So what's recommended for older adults? Well, the key guidelines for adults also apply to older adults. And again, if you recall, that's a 150 minutes a week of activities, so two and a half hours a week. And then a couple of strengths sessions as well, just like for, you know, adults, all adults, the recommendations are the same. But in addition, I would recommend the following key guidelines specifically for older adults. Excuse me. And these include as part of a weekly physical activity, older adults should consider activity that includes balanced training. And we talked about the reasons why, right? And these types of activities really, I mean, this is centered around reducing the chance of falls and helps us to resist falling. Fall prevention programs that include a balance training and other exercises to improve the activities of daily living can also significantly reduce the risk of injury if a fall does occur. So that's why it's important. Okay?

Strengthening the muscles of the back and the abdomen and the legs also improves balance. So those are some things to consider. Another consideration though, if you have like a chronic condition like diabetes or heart disease or arthritis, I want you to understand whether and how these conditions can affect your ability to do regular physical activity safely. So in that case, I'm going to ask that you consult your physician. Okay? Because, you definitely want to bring them into the conversation, particularly if you have any of these things like diabetes, heart disease or arthritis. Now, if you're an older adult, and you just can't get in 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobics activity each week, maybe because you're just not used to it or you're not participating in any activity right now, then just be as physically active as your abilities and the conditions allow.

It's the same guiding principle that I talk about no matter what your age or stage and that is, determine where you are right now. Add a little bit and just try to do a little bit better. Okay? That's kind of the going in game plan. But again, always talk with your healthcare professional about adding physical activity to your lifestyle. But the key is you want to try to avoid an inactive lifestyle because things start to spiral downhill pretty fast when that happens. I guess just understand that physical inactivity is among the strongest, the strongest predictors of physical disability in older individuals. So even in small amounts, some moderate intensity aerobic activity can definitely provide some health benefits. And again, in the show notes, I'll include a resource for older adults as well that explains why physical activity is key to healthy aging and what kinds of activity older adults need and how to get it really.

So now onto our final category here and that is women who are pregnant and really for women during the postpartum period as well. So many of you know that my wife, and I do pre and post natal training through TD Fitness. And we do that because family is so important to us and being fit during pregnancy has a host of benefits for mom and baby. So in fact, exercise can help prevent a number of things that you don't want during pregnancy. So exercise works in your favor in that case. I mean, you have enough going on, right? With all the challenges and changes that your body is going through, so exercise can help prevent swelling of extremities, prevent leg cramps, prevent varicose veins, insomnia, fatigue, back pain, urinary incontinence and it can reduce the amount of weight that you tend to carry after you give birth. So all of these are benefits, right?

Exercise can help prevent each of these things, but physical activity can also help you improve a number of things like your cardiovascular fitness, your strength, and endurance, energy levels, posture and biomechanics, which is one that we don't often think about, but there are parts of the body that naturally as your muscles start relaxing, and as your pregnancy progresses, you know, your center of gravity changes as you gain more weight or the preponderance of the weight is in the front of the body, you tend to lean forward. You know, well, you tend to lean backwards, but your shoulders tend to come forward and that tends to weaken your middle back muscles and those types of things. And you know, stretch maybe your posterior chain, but tighten your hip flexors.

So all of these are things that we bring into the crosscheck when we talk about pre and post natal training, because we want to maintain the balance, both front to back and left to right, the muscular balance, prevents some of the imbalances I should say, that are caused by just the natural progression of pregnancy. But physical activity can also help you improve circulation, your mood, self esteem and your sense of wellbeing. And probably most important for a lot of people is the recovery time after giving birth. So physical activity is good for all of that. So what does this actually look like? In general pregnant women should exercise three to five times a week, and they should shoot for the same goal that other adults shoot for, which is 150 minutes of exercise a week. Same as the general population, right?

Cardiovascular activity, the duration of those cardio sessions should generally be less than about 45 or 50 minutes. And what I recommend is the following. I recommend some core work, so working on building your core musculature. Some strength work, things like rows, again, to strengthen those back muscles that are just naturally going to get weaker as your pregnancy progresses. Strengthen your glutes, your quads. And those are areas that we tend to focus on. So core strength and then I typically prescribe three days of cardio, preferably that aerobic activities should be spread throughout the week. And I will tell you that the number one thing in my experience, what has been shown to be the most beneficial, you don't have to go out and run. You don't have to go take a spin class, you don't even have to swim or anything. But walking, walking is so good for you because it's cardio.

It's typically at the perfect level of intensity for just about any stage of pregnancy actually, it's low impact and most importantly though, it builds that pelvic floor, and you definitely want to build the muscles of the pelvic floor, because that's going to help in the pushing stages of actually giving birth. So super important there. So a lot of times women wonder how intense they should go though with exercise. And the answer is if you're used to exercising in a high intensity, you know, prior to being pregnant or if you were physically active before pregnancy, then you can continue those activities during pregnancy and in the postpartum period. Okay? But I will say that you should also stretch the muscles that tend to shorten and tighten. So things like the shoulder to the chest, the hip flexors, like I mentioned earlier, your IT band, your lower back, hamstrings, and calves. Those things are going to short, tend to shorten and tighten, but you want to strengthen the muscles that tend to lengthen and weaken. And I mentioned again, the upper back, the glutes, the abdominals, your pelvic floor and your quads.

So again, front to back balance, left to right balance. If you have more questions on that, just reach out to us here at TD Fitness and happy to talk about that. There are also a number of videos on YouTube that we've posted. In fact, I'll probably link to those in the show notes as well. A bunch of pregnancy exercise videos there. So the final thing I'll tell you on this is that exercise during, well two things. Number one, there are certain considerations and focus areas and things to stay away from within each trimester. Okay? So you again, that's where the expertise of a trainer can help you. But the other thing I wanted to mention is that exercise during pregnancy, it's not about maintaining your figure and looking good. It's about providing the best environment for the unborn child. We can worry about the aesthetics of how you look after you give birth. Okay? But while you're pregnant, the purpose of exercise is to provide the best environment for your unborn child.

So I always like to stress that, and as always talk with your healthcare provider, especially if you're pregnant and especially if you're working with a trainer, your doctor should clear you for exercise before starting any kind of pregnancy fitness routine. Okay? All right, I'm going to wrap this up. I will hit just a couple of things real quick. A couple of guidelines for adults with chronic health conditions and adults with disabilities. Just briefly, I won't go into much detail in the chronic health condition and disability area. Your healthcare provider is best positioned to help in that area. But I will say this as the physical activity guidelines for Americans explains that if you are able, you should again do a 150 minutes a week of exercise or an equivalent combination of intense and less intense exercise. The more intense you are, in your exercises, the less of it you have to do to kind of meet the threshold of what's recommended. And preferably again that aerobic activity should be spread throughout the week.

But adults with chronic conditions or disabilities who are able should also do muscle strengthening activities a couple of times a week. And if you're not able to meet those guidelines, then you should engage in regular physical activity according to your ability. Okay? So similar to what we said with older adults, but avoid inactivity. That's kind of what I want you to remember from this. All right. So to wrap this up, key takeaways for safe physical activity. There are some risks, but you can be confident that physical activity can be safe for almost everyone. Just about everyone. You want to choose the types of physical activity that are appropriate for your current fitness level, and your health goals because some activities are safer than others, particularly when you consider what stage or phase of life you are in.

Increase your physical activity gradually over time so that you can meet those guidelines or your health goals. If you're inactive right now, you should start low and go slow. Okay? Start with the lower intensity activities and gradually increase how often, how long those activities are done. And then don't forget to just consult with your healthcare provider if you are starting something that's very new to you, and particularly if you have chronic conditions or

symptoms. All right? That is all I have for you this week. Once again, the show notes for this episode can be found at [tdfitness.net/082](http://tdfitness.net/082) and you can find links to all of the references that I mentioned here. As always, I want to thank you all so much for tuning in, let me know if you find this helpful. Just leave me a comment on social media or a rating in iTunes, I sure would appreciate it. You all have a blessed one, Coach T signing out.