

In an era of spiraling health care expenditures, getting patients to be more active may be the ultimate low-cost therapy for achieving improved health outcomes. Studies show that regular physical activity (PA) has health benefits at any body weight and is critical for long-term weight management. Decades of research have shown that exercise is as effective as prescription medication in the management of several chronic diseases. Just as weight and blood pressure are addressed at nearly every health care visit, so should attention be given to PA.

Assessment: Use the *Physical Activity Vital Sign* to Assess Weekly PA Levels

Add these two simple questions to the health history form and electronic health record to determine if the patient is meeting the PA guidelines:

1. On average, how many days/week do you engage in moderate to vigorous PA (like brisk walking)? _____ days
 2. On average, how many minutes do you engage in PA at this level? _____ minutes
- Total Activity (days/week x minutes/day) = _____ minutes/week**

Brief Advice/Prescription: Basic Exercise Recommendations

- Encourage your patient to meet the PA guidelines (see chart). At minimum, adults should be more active over the course of a day (i.e., take frequent breaks from sitting, walk the dog, use the stairs). Every minute counts! Children and adolescents should engage in sports, dance, outdoor recreation and active games.
- Provide the [EIM “Sit Less. Move More”](#) handout to your patients. The [EIM Rx for Health Series](#) also provides condition-specific handouts.

2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

Age (yrs old)	Aerobic Activity Recommendations	Muscle Strengthening Recommendations
6-17	60 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity (PA)/day including at least 3 days of vigorous PA/wk	3 days/week and included as part of the 60 minutes of daily PA. Also include bone-loading activity
18-64	150-300 minutes of moderate PA/wk, 75 minutes of vigorous PA/wk or equivalent combination spread throughout the week	Muscle strengthening activities at moderate or greater intensity (all major muscle groups) on 2 or more days/wk
65+	Same as adults, or be as active as abilities and health conditions allow	Same as adults, but include balance training and combination activities (strength and aerobic training together)
All Ages	Sit less. Move more. All physical activity counts.	

Referral and Resources

- Advise patients to take advantage of local parks and recreation programs. Develop referral relationships with fitness facilities and exercise professionals who can provide support and guidance.
- Visit the EIM website at www.exerciseismedicine.org for the [EIM Health Care Provider Action Guide](#).

Health care providers who are more active, are more likely to counsel patients regarding physical activity. It's not enough to “talk the talk,” you have to literally “walk the walk.” YOU will feel better and move better as well.