It seems odd to talk about exercise as a risky activity, but when a person doesn’t exercise enough or exercises too much, it has consequences for both physical and mental health.

**NOT ENOUGH**
When a person does not regularly exercise or does not meet the bare minimum recommendations for physical activity as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is called having a sedentary lifestyle.

- Misses important social or professional obligations to workout.
- Feels extremely sad or guilty when not exercising.
- Doesn’t give body time to recover after intense workout.
- Continues to exercise despite illness or injury.

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**TOO MUCH**
When a person exercises so much that it starts to affect their social and professional life.

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**WHAT IS THE RECOMMENDED AMOUNT OF EXERCISE?**
The recommended amount of exercise for an adult includes aerobic activity and muscle strengthening activities.

**AEROBIC ACTIVITY**
- Aerobic activity must be done for at least 10 minutes at a time to have an impact.
- The minimum total amount of aerobic activity that should be done in a week depends on the intensity of the exercise.

- **150-300 MINUTES PER WEEK**
  - Moderate-intensity aerobic activity (heart rate is raised, light sweating, should be able to talk but not sing)

- **75-150 MINUTES PER WEEK**
  - Vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (heart rate is raised significantly, heavy sweating, can’t say more than a few words at a time)

**MUSCLE-STRENGTHENING**
- Muscle-strengthening activities that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms)

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- **80%** of adults do not meet the guidelines for both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities.
- **3%** of people meet the criteria for behavioral addiction to exercise.
- **2 out of 10 adults** do not meet the guidelines for both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities.

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**WHAT ARE THE HEALTH RISKS OF TOO MUCH OR NOT ENOUGH EXERCISE?**

**TOO MUCH**
- Dehydration & fatigue
- Increased injuries, cartilage damage & arthritis
- Fractured bones & osteoporosis
- Irregular periods & reproductive issues
- Heart problems

**NOT ENOUGH**
- Colon & breast cancer
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Cognitive decline & depression
- Heart attack & stroke

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**HOW IS EXERCISE RELATED TO MENTAL ILLNESS?**

Sedentary lifestyle may be a symptom of depression or anxiety when coupled with withdrawal from activities that one used to enjoy or social isolation. Additionally, living a sedentary lifestyle increases a person’s risk of developing depression.

When compulsive exercise is used as a way to “purge” calories that have been consumed, it can be a symptom of an eating disorder.

Eating disorders often accompany exercise addiction. Approximately 39-48% of people who have an eating disorder also struggle with exercise addiction.

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**GET MOVING**

If you’ve been living a sedentary lifestyle and want to get started with an exercise program:

- Talk to your doctor to see if there are any special considerations you should take when exercising.
- Start slow and work up to harder activities.
- Find a friend to exercise with to keep you motivated and accountable.

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**IF YOU NEED HELP**

Take a screen at mhascreening.org to determine if you are experiencing signs of an eating disorder or another underlying mental illness. Use the results to start a conversation with your health care provider.

Seek specialized treatment. You can find treatment providers using the online SAMHSA Treatment Locator at findtreatment.samhsa.gov or by calling the SAMHSA 24/7 Treatment Referral Line 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

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**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT WORKOUT HABITS. TAKE THE “WHAT’S TOO FAR?” QUIZ**

mentalhealthamerica.net/whatsTooFar

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**SOURCES**

1. https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/adults
4. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3210598
7. http://www.nchpad.org/403/2216/Sedentary~Lifestyle~is~Dangerous~to~Your~Health