

National Physical Activity Plan

How active should we be?

The National Guidelines on Physical Activity for Ireland (DH, 2009)[i] are based on international expert evidence and describe appropriate levels of health enhancing physical activity for the Irish population.

Children and young people (aged 2 –18)

All children and young people should be active, at a moderate to vigorous level, for at least 60 minutes every day. This should include muscle-strengthening, flexibility and bone-strengthening exercises 3 times a week.

Adults (aged 18–64)

Adults should be active for at least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity on 5 days a week (or 150 minutes a week).

Older people (aged 65+)

Older people should be active for at least 30 minutes a day of moderate intensity activity on 5 days a week, or 150 minutes a week with a focus on aerobic activity, muscle-strengthening and balance.

Adults with disabilities

People with disabilities should be as active as their ability allows. Aim to meet adult guidelines of at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity on 5 days a week.

Background to the Plan:

Get Ireland Active – the National Physical Activity Plan was developed following a commitment in Healthy Ireland, the Framework for improved Health and Wellbeing in Ireland 2013 – 2025.

Healthy Ireland is a Government-led initiative which aims to create an Irish society where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health, and where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society. *Healthy Ireland* has come about because of concerns that the current health status of people living in Ireland – including lifestyle trends and health inequalities – is leading us towards a future that is dangerously unhealthy, and very likely unaffordable. *Healthy Ireland* seeks to provide people and communities with accurate information on how to improve their health and wellbeing and seeks to empower and motivate them by making the healthy choice the easier choice.

The National Physical Activity Plan

The National Physical Activity Plan has been developed in response to the increasing evidence that being physically inactive is one of the leading risk factors for health and the Plan was developed based on recognised international evidence and practice. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified physical inactivity as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality.

The Plan was developed by Working Group co-chaired by the Department of Health and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and included representatives from many of the key stakeholders with responsibility for promotion of physical activity. Extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders was also undertaken in the development of the Plan.

In common with many of the social determinants which impact on the lives of people living in Ireland identified in Healthy Ireland, many interlinking policies and programme implementation across domains such as health, education, sport, recreational physical activity, transport and environment all have important and interlinking roles to play in promotion of physical activity. The draft Plan draws heavily on the best international evidence, particularly on policy recommendations coming from the World Health Organization and on the Toronto Charter for Physical Activity.

The Plan is structured around eight thematic areas as follows:

1. Public Awareness, Education and Communication
2. Children and Young People
3. Health
4. Environment
5. Workplaces
6. Sport and physical activity in the community
7. Research, Monitoring and Evaluation
8. Implementation through partnership

A cross-sectoral oversight and implementation group will be established, jointly led by the Department of Health and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport to take a leadership and stewardship role in implementation of the Plan.

Key actions in the Plan will commence during 2016.