

Staying physically active is easy: Walking

Every physical activity counts!

Incorporating physical activity into your daily life – e.g. by walking, cycling, climbing stairs, doing housework and gardening – will improve your physical and mental health. As a general rule, any exercise is better than none and increases health and well-being whatever your age.

Walking...

- enhances well-being
- promotes good health
- protects the environment



Health-promoting exercise such as walking is the most natural and sustainable form of exercise and can be easily incorporated into everyday life at any age.

Walking uses the body's large muscle groups, which increases energy expenditure. The speed and incline of your walk can influence the intensity and therefore how much energy you expend. Brisk walking is a moderate intensity activity, like regular cycling. Brisk walking makes you breathless, increases your heart rate and raises your body temperature. When walking briskly, you can still talk but not sing.



Chart 1: Medium-intensity area with examples. Physical activity recommendations Switzerland (Source : hepa.ch. Magglingen, FOSPO, 2022).

Walking = low-threshold introduction

Walking is a low-threshold introduction to more physical activity, particularly for people who do little or no physical activity and whose daily lives are sedentary. Because every step you take to reduce inactivity, such as prolonged sitting, will have a positive effect on your health, well-being, quality of life and fitness, whatever your age.

Putting it into practice: Every step counts

Whether it's when going shopping, to work or to personal or professional appointments, recommend making a conscious effort to cover regular journeys on foot and making the most of walking opportunities such as lunch breaks, waiting times at bus stops and after work to get moving. Walking promotes well-being and concentration, boosts the circulation and helps combat fatigue and cold in winter. As an added bonus, walking a few stops instead of waiting for the bus or tram can even save you money.

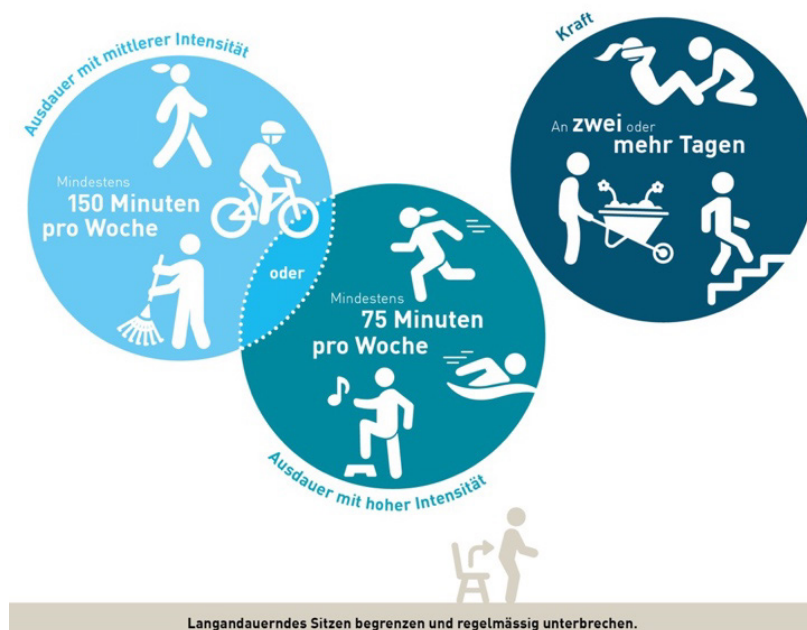


It's never too late to take the first step

Regular physical activity reduces the risk of many non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer, diseases which cause almost three-quarters of all deaths in Switzerland. People who are physically active not only build muscle, but also strengthen their bones, joints, organs and immune systems. In addition, they see improvements in their memory, learning ability and quality of sleep. Exercise also has a positive effect on mental well-being, social contacts and independence in later life.

Physical activity recommendations for adults (18-64)

Täglich empfohlene Bewegung für Erwachsene (18–64 Jahre)



The biggest health benefit comes from a minimum of 150 to 300 minutes of endurance-oriented, medium-intensity exercise (e.g. walking or cycling, gardening or housework) or a minimum of 75 to 150 minutes of high-intensity exercise (e.g. jogging, swimming, cross-country skiing, zumba) per week. Besides endurance, you should also do muscle-strengthening exercises of medium or high intensity at least twice per week.

Chart 2: Physical activity recommendations Switzerland (Source: hepa.ch 2023)

Physical activity in nature promotes mental and physical health

Strolling in nature, e.g. in forests, has a **positive impact on mental health and helps to reduce stress**. This effect was observable after even only a half-hour walk.

The World Health Organization (WHO) similarly emphasises the positive impact of green spaces on mental and physical health: The results of a study conducted in European cities show that more than 42,000 deaths could be prevented each year if everyone had access to a green space within 300 metres. Green spaces also reduce summer heat, filter pollutants and dust, improve the quality of air and life, invite people to relax and are an important motivation and incentive for many people to be physically active and engage in sports.



Visiting forests is good for your health

Walking and spending time in forests and green spaces reduce stress and ensure more physical activity, strengthen the immune system and mental health, and help prevent non-communicable diseases.

[Further information on the subject of environment and health \[in German, French and Italian\]](#)

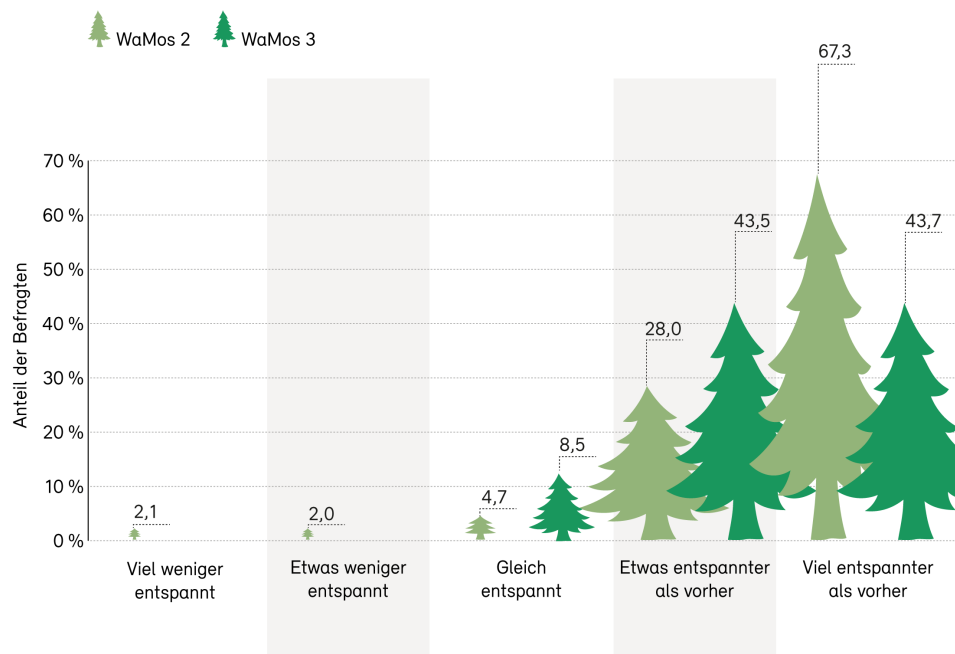


Chart 3: Forests make an important contribution to the well-being and health of the population.

The majority of respondents visit forests as a form of recreation and feel more relaxed after having visited forests.

(Source: [WaMos population survey](#) (in German, 2010, 2020))

Sources

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