

THE MINIMUM EFFECTIVE WEEK

Two strength sessions, regular walking and one harder session. The least you can do to get real results.

AT A GLANCE

- UK guidelines: 150 minutes of moderate activity a week (or 75 vigorous) plus strength work on at least 2 days (NHS).
- A review of 16 studies found the biggest benefit from about 30 to 60 minutes of strength training a week.
- Daily steps: benefits rise up to roughly 6,000 to 8,000 a day for over 60s and 8,000 to 10,000 for under 60s.

YOUR WEEK

Day	What to do	Time
Monday	Strength A (below)	40 to 45 min
Tuesday	Brisk walk, cycle or easy jog. You can talk in full sentences.	30 to 45 min
Wednesday	Strength B (below)	40 to 45 min
Thursday	Easy movement and a walk	20 to 30 min
Friday	Optional harder session: 6 rounds of 1 minute hard, 2 minutes easy	25 to 30 min
Weekend	One long, enjoyable walk, run, swim or ride	45 to 60 min

Strength A

Exercise	Sets x reps
Goblet squat	3 × 8 to 10
Dumbbell Romanian deadlift	3 × 8 to 10
Push-up or dumbbell bench press	3 × 8 to 12
One-arm dumbbell row	3 × 10 each side
Front plank	3 × 30 to 40 sec

Strength B

Exercise	Sets x reps
Split squat or step-up	3 × 8 each leg
Glute bridge or hip thrust	3 × 10 to 12
Dumbbell shoulder press	3 × 8 to 10
Lat pulldown or inverted row	3 × 10
Farmer's carry	3 × 30 to 40 m

HOW TO DO IT

- **Warm up** for 5 minutes: brisk walk, then a lighter set of the first exercise.
- **Rest** 60 to 90 seconds between sets.
- **Choose a weight** that leaves about 2 reps in the tank on every set. Technique first. If form breaks down, the weight is too heavy.
- **Progress with double progression:** keep the weight until you hit the top of the rep range on all sets, then add the smallest jump available next session.
- **Steps:** track your average for a week, then add 1,000 a day until you reach 7,000 to 8,000.

Myth: if it is not an hour, it does not count. **Reality:** in a review of 16 studies, the largest drop in risk of early death, heart disease and cancer came at around 30 to 60 minutes of strength training a week. More is not always better.

Pregnant, returning from injury, or have a heart or joint condition? Check with your doctor or physio first, and swap exercises that cause pain.

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Not medical advice. This guide is general information for healthy adults. Speak to a doctor or registered healthcare professional before changing your exercise or diet, especially if you have a medical condition, an injury, are pregnant or breastfeeding. **Sources:** NHS: physical activity guidelines for adults aged 19 to 64. Momma et al., Muscle-strengthening activities and mortality in major non-communicable diseases, British Journal of Sports Medicine 2022 (16 cohort studies). Paluch et al., Daily steps and all-cause mortality, Lancet Public Health 2022 (15 cohorts, 47,471 adults). © ML Performance Coaching.