

Build Activity Into Your Everyday Life

Prevent Disease and Stay Healthy

Physical activity is one of the best primary preventers of disease and ill-health ie. it prevents disease or injury before it has a chance to occur. A good example could be the use of vaccinations to protect against a disease or virus.

Research has proven that just because you are healthy today, doesn't mean you should sit back and relax and only consider doing physical activity once you have a problem. Studies have proven that physical activity can prevent the risk of disease in more than 13 different conditions, so why wait, let's get going now!



The benefits of physical activity for healthy people include:

- ① **Improved mood and mental health:** Physical activity changes hormones in the brain and increases a release of endorphins (the happy hormones) and reduces cortisol levels (stress hormones). In addition, physical activity has been proven to reduce the risk of developing depression and been helpful in managing depression. People who are more active also have a lower chance of reaching burnout and are better at managing stress levels. With more activity you are able to get fitter and stronger and consequently do more - this in turn helps build your self-esteem and self-worth, motivating you to do even more and achieve things you never thought possible. You may also choose to exercise with others or in a group and the socialising with others can also be hugely positive on your mood.
- ② **Improved cognitive function:** Dementia risk is reduced by up to 24% in people who engaged in moderate to high levels of activity. And Alzheimer's disease risk was reduced by 37% in people with high levels of physical activity.
- ③ **Maintain healthy weight:** Exercise alone won't guarantee long-term weight loss, a balanced diet and behaviour change is also necessary. However, exercise helps regulate your blood sugars, improve your glycaemic index and build lean muscle mass. This healthy body image and improved body composition will allow weight control, improved fitness and improved function. Weight loss also reduces the load on your joints and stronger muscles support more stable joints, allowing you to do even more.
- ④ **Live longer:** Low fitness has been attributed as a cause of 16% of deaths. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of death by 30%. People who exercise regularly can live for an additional 4.5 years compared to sedentary people. This is all because of the effects of physical activity on muscles, bone health, blood vessel function, nerve function and chemicals in the brain and blood vessel walls. The benefits to your psychological well-being are also likely to contribute to living longer.
- ⑤ **Reduced chance of falls:** Exercise has been proven to reduce the risk of falling by as much as 21% because you have stronger muscles and more stable joints. Regular exercise also promotes better 'communication' with the nerves from the brain to the feet and benefits balance, control and co-ordination, all of which are required to make you more stable on your feet. People doing specific balance exercises with daily activity reduced their fall risk by as much as 49%.
- ⑥ **Improved quality of life:** Regular physical activity will improve your cardiovascular fitness (your heart and lungs), you will feel less breathless and able to do more. Stronger muscles demand less oxygen as they work more efficiently, so you are able to do more with less effort. All of this adds up to being able to fulfil chores, tasks and work more easily, stay independent, and enjoy life more.
- ⑦ **Improved sleep and less fatigue:** It is a well-known fact that as your fitness levels increase so your sleep improves. Improved sleep will help reduce feelings of tiredness. Also, the fitter and stronger you become the easier tasks and chores or exercises will feel, leaving you less tired and empowered to do more.
- ⑧ **Manage stress:** Exercise is a healthy outlet for nervous energy and a welcome distraction from negative thoughts and feelings. It helps reduce fear symptoms and catastrophisation and increases a sense of calm and overall wellbeing. Better sleep and improved socialising also leads to enhanced relationships. All these factors contribute to reducing stress levels through regular exercise.

There is a 'gold standard' of how much physical activity one should do in order to achieve optimal health benefits.

Making everyday life more active

Apart from formal exercise or group activities, you can build activity into your everyday life. Small changes will ultimately make big differences to your quality of life.

Ideas for making everyday life more active include:

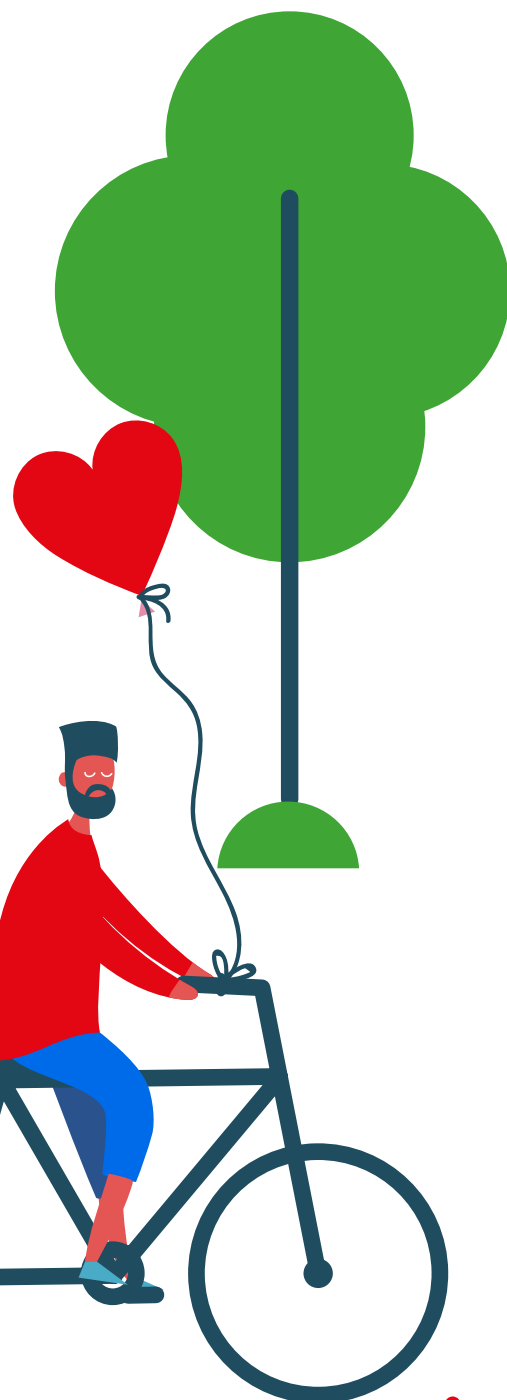
- Swimming or aqua
- Playing with grandchildren
- Singing
- Walking club
- Exercise class
- Pilates, yoga, Thai Chi



- Take active breaks
- Walking meetings
- Stand when on the telephone
- Stand at your desk
- Take stairs instead of lift

- Home-based exercises
- Stand during advert break
- Walking
- Singing
- Gardening
- Housework
- Walking the dog

- Cycling
- Walk
- Park further away in the car park
- On public transport get off a stop earlier and walk



The Last Word

A good idea before starting an activity is to sit down with your therapist or even a family member or friend and write down what it is you want to achieve. Set goals, easy achievable ones initially. These will help build self-esteem and confidence. Then you can start looking from short-term easier goals (which may be as simple as walking 10 minutes every day, or achieving a walk around the block 3 times a week) to middle- and long-term ones, extending over the coming months and year.

'Action planning' is the next step. Write down what you are going to do each day or as a weekly plan. Keeping these plans, together with a daily diary, will help you stay motivated and see the improvements over time. You can use self-monitoring devices like pedometers, wrist-worn accelerometers or smartphones to keep track of your daily step count. There are also many activity apps that can be downloaded to mobile phones to help you monitor your activity levels, motivate you or

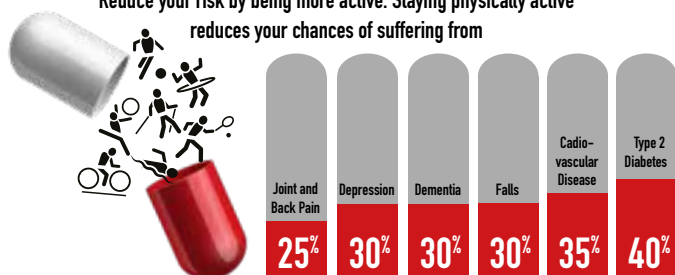
provide you with daily exercise routines. Get help and advice from your physical therapist about what would best suit you and your condition.

Make sure you have support – be it family and friends or a physical therapist, support group or exercise programme. The right support will be invaluable in keeping you motivated and encouraged, particularly on those bad days, and make you accountable for changing your life!

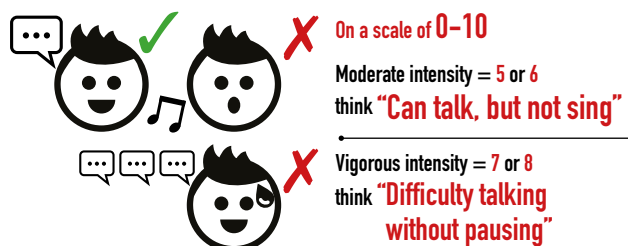
Gold Standard Exercise Recommendations for Health

If Exercise Was A Pill

Reduce your risk by being more active. Staying physically active reduces your chances of suffering from



What is Moderate Intensity Versus Vigorous Intensity Activity?



What Activity Should I Be Doing If I'm Between the Ages of 5 – 17?

- 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity – every day
- > 60 minutes daily will give even better health benefits
- Most of the daily physical activity should be aerobic
- But should incorporate vigorous – intensity activities that strengthen muscle and bone, at least 3 times per week



How Activity Intensity Reduces Your Risk of Dying



Reference: Domains of physical activity and all-cause mortality: systematic review and dose-response meta-analysis of cohort studies. <http://bit.ly/2S7BXOW>

What Activity Should I Be Doing If I'm Between 18 – 64?

- 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity each week, or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity
- Aerobic activity should be performed in bouts of at least 10 minutes
- 300 minutes of moderate-intensity or 150 of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity brings even greater health benefits
- Muscle-strengthening activities should be done involving major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week.



What Activity Should I Be Doing If I'm Over 65 Years of Age?

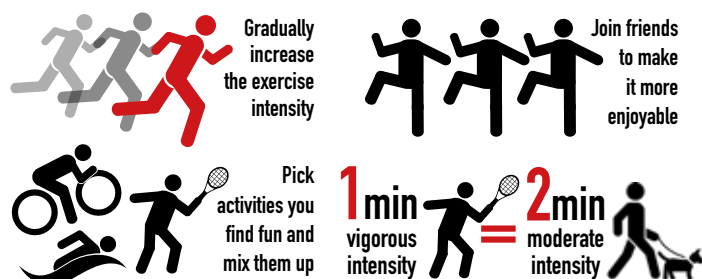
- 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity each week, or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity
- Aerobic activity should be performed in bouts of at least 10 minutes
- 300 minutes of moderate-intensity or 150 of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity brings even greater health benefits
- Activities that enhance balance and prevent falls on 3 or more days per week
- Muscle-strengthening activities should be done involving major muscle groups, on 2 or more days a week
- The goal is to be as physically active as your abilities and conditions allow.



First Steps to Being More Active



TIP If you are starting out try breaking your daily goal into shorter bouts of 10 minutes at a time



Reference: Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health, World Health Organisation 2018

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