

## **E is for exercise/ get active/ move more**

### **Exercise for physical and mental wellbeing**

Do you get 2.5 hours (150 minutes) exercise every week? Adults are recommended to do at least this amount of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as fast walking or cycling each week.

That's at least 30 minutes of brisk walking or other physical activity five times a week. 'Brisk' meaning your heart rate will increase, you will feel warmer and breathe a little faster than normal but are still able to carry on a conversation.

The mental health benefits are of course huge; it can help with low mood, anxiety, stress, confidence and self esteem. Regular physical activity is linked with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. Also, exercise is essential for slowing age related cognitive decline and for boosting wellbeing in general.

Exercise works by improving muscle mass, strength, balance, and coordination. Therefore, unlike treatment with medicine, exercises work simultaneously on various aspects of one's mental and physical health.

There are many barriers to exercise. Maybe finding the time and the motivation is a challenge for you. Feeling self conscious or not good enough to do traditional forms of exercise can be a real block to getting started.

Other barriers to exercise can come in the form of tiredness, achy joints and other physical issues. If you do feel you could be doing more exercise it's worth trying to figure out what is standing in your way and completing the action plan at the end of this document to see if this can help with motivation.

### **What exercise should I do?**

Find activities that you enjoy, then make them a part of your life. It may be that you enjoyed a certain type of exercise at another time of your life and you can pick this up again. You may benefit from starting at a slower pace and sometimes there are slower paced/ beginners versions of an activity you have done previously that will ease you in gently. Walking hockey is one example:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/get-inspired/38637447>

To get some ideas for exercise that may suit you take the BBC's 60 second interactive test:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28062001>

Here's a link to a similar quiz in case you would like to try another one:

<https://quizterra.com/en/which-sport-is-right-for-you>

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### **Exercising at home**

If you don't have much motivation or time to get out and about for exercise have a look through the ideas below to see how you can stay physically active at home:

[https://247.nuffieldhealth.com/health-and-wellbeing-together?\\_its=JTdCJTIdmlkJTlYJTNBjTlYyYWY2OTc4OWUtMTg5Ni00YWNkLTIjOGMtODk2MzkyNTc4OWM2JTlYJTJDjTlYy3RhZGUIMjIIM0EIMjJybHR%2BMTY2ODc2MjQwMn5sYW5kfjJfODk2NTdfcmVmXzQxYjVvODg2MzQ1YTQ5N2MzNDdmNWE5MTljYWRkYTVlJTlYJTJDjTlYy2l0ZUlkJTlYJTNBMTMzOTQlN0Q%3D](https://247.nuffieldhealth.com/health-and-wellbeing-together?_its=JTdCJTIdmlkJTlYJTNBjTlYyYWY2OTc4OWUtMTg5Ni00YWNkLTIjOGMtODk2MzkyNTc4OWM2JTlYJTJDjTlYy3RhZGUIMjIIM0EIMjJybHR%2BMTY2ODc2MjQwMn5sYW5kfjJfODk2NTdfcmVmXzQxYjVvODg2MzQ1YTQ5N2MzNDdmNWE5MTljYWRkYTVlJTlYJTJDjTlYy2l0ZUlkJTlYJTNBMTMzOTQlN0Q%3D)

### **Sample exercise plans, how to overcome barriers and much more**

If you would like to read up further on how to start exercising try the following links or do your own search online.

This gives a sample exercise plan and other useful information:

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/how-to-start-exercising#1-week-sample-exercise-program>

This covers barriers to exercise and gives a sample exercise plan etc:

<https://www.bupa.co.uk/health-information/exercise-fitness/exercise-getting-started>

This has some great examples of how to overcome barriers to exercise:

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/healthy-living/how-to-start-exercising-and-stick-to-it.htm>

Here are a few more ideas on how to move more:

- Ad breaks- when you're watching TV use the breaks to get up and move your body e.g. stretches, star jumps or squats.
- Bake some bread- kneading dough will give your arms a proper workout.
- Clean up- even a bit of vacuuming, mopping, dusting and tidying up can get you moving and feeling good.
- Cycling- try a short bike ride and maybe build up the length of time you are out on a weekly basis.
- Dance like no one's watching- put on your favourite song and move to the beat!
- Do some 'easy exercise', like stretching, before you start your day.
- Football - have a kick-about in a local park or maybe join a club.

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- Get off the bus one stop earlier or park further away than usual and walk the final part of your journey.
- Go for a walk at lunchtime.
- Join a local sports club- is there a sport you have always wanted to try or one you previously loved and haven't done for a while?
- Organise a sporting activity with friends or colleagues.
- Plank challenge- look online to learn this super easy way to work your core.
- Stand up- stand more whenever possible, e.g. if you're on the phone, having a chat with your family in the kitchen and even while playing video games.
- Step to it- if you have stairs in your house or building run/ walk quickly up and down them and you'll quickly get your heart pumping.
- Swimming- this is a great form of exercise that uses the whole body and the benefits can be further boosted by trying outdoor swimming.
- Take a few minutes- there are lots of Youtube videos and apps with daily workout routines lasting for 5-10 minutes that leave you feeling like you've just hit the gym.
- Take the stairs not the lift or escalator.
- Walk into work if you go into an office- perhaps with a colleague so you can 'connect' as well.
- Walk to see someone instead of calling or emailing.
- Youtube yoga- there are loads of online guides, if you're starting out search for beginners yoga; you could also try 'desk yoga' or 'seated yoga'

Remember exercise doesn't need to be particularly intense for you to feel good- slower-paced activities, such as walking, can have the benefit of encouraging social interactions as well as providing some level of exercise. Further down the page you will find more on the benefits of walking.

### **Just One Thing**

It can be hard to fit a full workout into every day, but it turns out this isn't really necessary. In his podcast 'Exercise less, more often' (available via the BBC/ Spotify) Dr Moseley enlists the help of Marie Murphy, Professor of Exercise and Health at Ulster University, to explore why doing short bursts of exercise can actually be more beneficial than a hard gym session. Dr Moseley reveals how simply doing exercise in short bursts could be an easier way to fit movement into your day and boost your metabolism.

Speaking on his podcast Dr Mosley explained: "Doing exercise in short chunks really can help you burn more calories, lose more weight, and help improve your blood glucose and blood pressure to a greater degree than doing it in larger chunks."

The idea is to set your alarm for every 40 minutes or so when you're sitting down. When the alarm goes off, stand up and do some exercise.

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Dr Mosley recommends “exercise snacking”, which means “doing multiple short bursts of exercise during the day rather than trying to fit it all into a full workout”. He added: “Stairs are a particularly good way of getting in a few exercise snacks.”

“The surprising thing about exercise snacking is that although each session is short, it gives you the same, possibly even greater, fitness and health benefits than doing a full 30-minute workout.”

It seems a brisk 10-minute walk here, taking the stairs there really does add up. You can do anything from press ups and squats to simply walking up and down the stairs, as long you get moving and keep yourself active. This kind of exercise is also useful since you can do it from home and fit into your busy schedule without setting extra time for a full workout.

### **The benefits of walking**

Walking at a set time on a regular basis in a group is an obvious choice for exercise. This gives you routine plus the sense of belonging and feeling supported by a group.

This will increase motivation to attend and therefore help you get regular exercise. Also knowing that you will be doing gentle exercise compared to going to the gym or running will hopefully help you maintain this.

‘Walking is man’s best medicine,’ said Ancient Greek physician Hippocrates. Indeed, once you commit to any regular exercise it can be more effective than taking medication.

The simple act of putting one foot in front of another is said to be 'the perfect exercise'; one that is both meditative and rejuvenating. But what are the other benefits of walking?

Even a short walk as little as 10 minutes can have a whole raft of benefits. A Ramblers factsheet lists the following mental health and wellbeing benefits:

- \* Physically active people are nearly 30% less likely to become depressed and staying active helps those who are depressed recover (Walking for Health)
- \* According to the NHS, 1 in 4 adults and 1 in 10 children experience a mental health problem in England <https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/>
- \* Being physically active helps people manage stress, anxiety and intrusive thoughts. It can also help improve self-esteem and mood (Mind, 2019)
- \* Regular physical activity can also reduce your risk of becoming depressed by 30% (Public Health England, 2019)
- \* Being active on a regular basis can also lead to people having more energy, feeling more relaxed and having a better concentration and memory (British Heart Foundation, 2018)
- \* People who walked to work reported greater job satisfaction and wellbeing in a study of over 26,000 employed people living in England (Chatterjee etc, UWE Bristol, 2017)

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\* Being active also improves self-perception and self-esteem, mood and sleep quality.

Walking has numerous benefits, some of which are already mentioned above. Studies show it improves mood and reduces stress, anxiety and fatigue, all of which can affect us at different times in our lives. It can also ease brain fog and improve concentration. This is because getting fresh air and natural light whilst being active can increase focus.

Also, as slow movement pioneer Carl Honoré says, “travelling on foot can be meditative, fostering a slow frame of mind. When we walk, we are aware of the details around us – birds, trees, the sky, shops and houses, other people. We make connections.”

Use the following link to discover more health benefits of walking- ‘the wonder drug’:

<https://walking.heartfoundation.org.au/>

### **Action plan for exercise**

Complete the following to boost your motivation and commitment to doing some additional exercise in the next week or longer term. As mentioned above this can be something really small such as 10 squats each day or walking quickly up and down the stairs.

My goal is...

Example: to increase my fitness and overall wellbeing

Now on to action planning; it is important to include the following in any action plan:

What action(s) you are going to take

How much you are going to do

When you are going to take action

How many days a week/ month you plan to take action

Example: This week I will do squats (WHAT) x 10 (HOW MUCH) before I have breakfast (WHEN) every day (HOW MANY DAYS)

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Complete the following:

This week I will...

----- (WHAT)

----- (HOW MUCH)

----- (WHEN)

----- (HOW MANY DAYS)

How committed and motivated are you to this action plan on a scale from 0-10 (10 being the highest)?

What would increase your motivation and commitment? How can you use this to help yourself?