



Exercise and mental health

Increase your physical activity and improve your emotional wellbeing

Being active is great for your physical health and fitness, but evidence shows that it can also improve your mental wellbeing.

Mental wellbeing means feeling good - about yourself and the world around you - and being able to get on with life in the way you want.

How can I get more active?

Make activities part of your daily life. Exercise doesn't have to be about running around a track or working out in a gym. It can just be about being more active each day and making small changes to your daily routine.

If medical problems stop you from doing one thing, there may be others that you can do.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

At home

- jobs around the house e.g. gardening and DIY
- put some music on and dance
- purchase an exercise DVD - and use it!

At work

- get off the bus or train one stop earlier and walk the rest of the way
- walk or cycle to work
- take the stairs instead of the lift or escalator
- take a walk at lunchtime
- go for a swim or visit the gym in your lunch break
- don't pick up the phone, walk to see a colleague

During your free time

- walk to the shops instead of taking the car
- take up an active hobby such as cycling or walking
- go for a walk with friends
- join an exercise class like yoga, pilates or zumba
- leave the car at home for short journeys
- go for a swim

Falls Prevention

Older adults at risk of falls, such as people with weak legs, poor balance and some medical conditions, should do exercises to improve balance and co-ordination on at least two days a week. These could include yoga, tai chi and dancing.

How often should I exercise?

To keep healthy, adults should do 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity every week.

Activities that are considered moderate intensity for most people include:

- walking fast
- doing water aerobics
- ballroom and line dancing
- riding a bike on level ground
- playing doubles tennis
- pushing a lawn mower
- canoeing
- volleyball



Drink plenty of water

It is important you keep hydrated when taking part in physical activity. Try to avoid drinking sugary drinks and too much alcohol.

For more information about alcohol and recommended units visit [NHS Choices - Alcohol Units](#)

Recommended physical activity levels*

- children aged under 5 years - should do 180 minutes every day
- young people 5-18 years - should do 60 minutes every day
- adults 19-64 years - should do 150 minutes every week
- older adults 65+ years - should do 150 minutes every week

*NHS Choices

I haven't exercised for a long time, how should I get started?

If you haven't exercised for a while, then it is a good idea to gradually introduce physical activity into your daily routine.

You can also seek advice and guidance from your GP or a qualified professional, such as a fitness instructor.

Remember, any exercise is better than none.

Should I set myself goals?

Making changes to your lifestyle can be daunting and can cause anxiety.

Setting yourself goals is a great way to see how the changes you've made are helping. Make sure you are realistic when setting your goals. For example:

- join a beginners' class before moving on to the advanced class
- start your new running schedule with a 1km walk or jog, then increase gradually

Activities on a budget

If you can't afford to spend money on exercise classes and gym memberships, think about the ways you can exercise for free.

Walk everywhere

Walking is underrated as a form of exercise, but it's one of the easiest ways to get more activity into your day, lose weight and become healthier.

Get around on two wheels

Whether you're cycling to work, to school, to the shops or just for fun, the humble bicycle is an easy way to get more active.

Skipping

If you've not used a skipping rope since your school playground days then now's your chance to rediscover how fun and beneficial skipping can be.

Running

Running is great for weight loss, improving heart and lung function, strengthening bones and giving you a general sense of wellbeing. To help get you started, try NHS Choices Couch to 5k plan.

You can also sign up as a member of 2gether NHS Foundation Trust. All our members can access NHS Discounts which regularly has offers from gyms and leisure companies.

Keeping track

You may want to see how increasing your physical activity is improving your emotional wellbeing. You can use Moodometer to help you do this.

Moodometer is a discrete, portable and easy to use interactive mood diary which helps you monitor and understand your emotional wellbeing.

You can record influences that affect your wellbeing such as physical health and include details of physical activity in your personal diary.

Moodometer is currently available on AppStore for iPhone, iPod and iPad. We are also launching an online version this autumn.

Think about activities you have done before and liked.

If it is something you enjoyed you are more likely to stick at it.



Further information

For more information about increasing your physical activity and improving your wellbeing, please visit:

NHS Choices

NHS Choices is full of information on how to get started with physical activity and ways to improve your wellbeing.

www.nhs.uk/livewell

Walk for Life

Are you feeling inspired to get out and explore your local countryside? Walk for Life can help you to find great walks in your local area. You can even tailor the walks to suit you, by plotting your route on their interactive map.

www.walkforlife.info

Change for Life

Would you or your family like to be healthier and happier? Would you like loads of ideas, recipes and games to help you do this?

www.nhs.uk/changeforlife

Walking for Health

Find out about local walks taking place near you with a trained walk leader. All the walks are free and take place over easy terrain.

www.wfh.naturalengland.org.uk