

Getting Active



Exercise?

Staying physically healthy is important for everyone, but can be particularly hard if someone has a mental health problem.

Symptoms of some mental illnesses include lower energy, problems with motivation, loss of enjoyment in activities, and problems with sleep.

Some people can feel like their medication affects their energy levels too.

These symptoms can really get in the way of staying fit and healthy.

Some things to consider...

Other medical conditions – Be careful if you have another medical condition, such as asthma, which may be affected by a new exercise. If you are concerned speak to your care co-ordinator or Doctor before starting.

Be practical – Plan your exercise around your budget and support systems:

- Will you need a lift to a sports centre?
- How much will it cost?
- Ask your care co-ordinator if there is any financial support to help with exercise.

Be brave – Starting a new sport, joining a gym or trying exercise for the first time can be scary. Why not talk with your friends, family or care co-ordinator to get some ideas and encouragement to help you.

How to get exercising

Start small. Some activity is better than none.

Walk or cycle to the shops instead of driving.

Choose something you'll enjoy – or at least something you won't hate!

Don't go to the gym if you've never liked the gym. Go for a walk, ride a bike, try gardening or play football at the park with some friends.

Choose a time of the day/week that works for you.

Everybody is different and motivated at different times of the day. Just be cautious about evening exercise as you may have problems getting to sleep. Gradually build up physical activity.

Increase the amount of time in a day, or the number of days in a week, that you're exercising.

Aim for 30-60 minutes a day.

Getting warm or a bit puffed out doesn't feel that great but it

means you're working hard and it will get easier.

Remember if you smoke you may feel puffed out very quickly. It's important to keep at it, and you will be amazed at how much longer you can go without feeling puffed out in only a few weeks.

Don't forget different foods contain different amounts of energy. It will take about 40 minutes jogging, or two hours walking to burn off a 100g pack of crisps, but a whole lot less for a banana! So, if you've had some chocolate cake or chips enjoy them, then balance it out by eating healthily for the rest of the day.

"I take the dog for a walk when I'm bored instead of going to the fridge."

"I can't find much time to exercise and I don't want to get sweaty on the way to work, so I walk part of the way home instead of getting the bus all the way."

Apart from maintaining a healthy body, exercise releases chemicals in your brain that make you feel good.

Regular exercise can also boost your self-esteem and help you concentrate, sleep, feel and look better.

A few of the positive benefits of exercising include:

- Less tension, stress and mental fatigue
- A natural energy boost
- Improved sleep/sleep patterns
- A sense of achievement
- Less anger or frustration
- Meeting other people

What type of exercise suits me?

What type of exercise suits me?

There are two main ways that your body burns energy when you exercise:

Aerobic exercise happens when your body uses oxygen for endurance type activities (e.g. cardio exercises such as jogging) and this can reduce your body fat levels.

Anaerobic exercise happens when your body switches to burning fuel without oxygen for intense speed or strength activities (e.g. sprinting or weight lifting), this increases the lean muscle to fat body mass ratio.

A balanced combination of both types of exercise is best for keeping fit, strong and at a healthy weight.



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Ways to help – stick with it

- Don't fly solo. Find a friend, family member or local group you can exercise with. It makes it more fun, but also helps you to keep up momentum if you know that you have this commitment to others. Let people know what you're working towards and let them help you stay motivated.
- Set achievable goals. For someone who hasn't been exercising at all and exercising once a week for 20 minutes is even too much, just try to get out of the door and give it a go – once you're out you might just feel like going further.
- Hang in there! If you miss a day or a week, don't give up; try to push yourself to get going again.
- Notice your progress. When walking or jogging, time yourself and notice your improvements.
- Try something new. If what you've been doing has got boring, get some coaching, get a friend involved, or try something completely different.
- Find something flexible that you can do when you feel like it. Try an exercise or dance DVD, go skating, do some gardening, kick a ball in the park or go for a walk with a friend.
- What about technology? Try a bit of Wii Sports.

Money matters

Exercise doesn't need to cost a lot of money.

- Park at the far end of the supermarket
- Leave the car at home for short journeys
- Time your daily walks to and from the train station – can you go faster?
- Put on some music for a 10 minute dance



Ditch the lift!

- Use the stairs for less than four floors.
- Apply some real elbow grease when cleaning the car/cleaning the house/gardening – crank up the music and have fun!
- Get skipping – using a skipping rope is a cheap and quick way to get some good exercise.



Resources

There are some great clubs, classes and groups out there waiting for you to sign up and get involved. As well as searching online for exercises you are interested in, your local council, library, community centre or GP surgery will have information.

- If you've got a phone with apps or access to YouTube, search for videos, apps or podcasts which can help you with exercise ideas.
- You can find apps or sites that can record how far you've walked, help plan a run, show you yoga or pilates or abs workouts, or play an exercise music mix – whatever you're interested in.
- You might want to have a look at couch-to-5k on the NHS Choices for help with taking up running: www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/c25k
- For more information about health and fitness, visit the Live Well page on NHS Choices – www.nhs.uk/livewell/fitness

No excuses...

Top five reasons given NOT TO exercise

1. It's too hot/cold/windy/rainy
2. I can't be away from my phone/iPad/laptop
3. My shorts are dirty
4. I'm too busy/tired
5. I'll do it tomorrow

Top five reasons given TO exercise

1. I'm in a better mood and have more energy
2. I'm less stressed
3. I sleep better
4. I'm more confident and look better
5. I have made new friends



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