Get active!
Contents

1. Introduction
2. What does it mean to be more active?
3. Why should I be more active?
4. Who can benefit from being more active?
5. How much do you do already?
6. How much activity should I be doing?
7. What does moderate-intensity mean?
8. What is the benefit of moderate-intensity activity?
9. How to get started
10. So what's stopping you?
11. Safety points
12. For more information
13. Hale Health and Carers' Advice Line
Introduction

The convenience of modern life is making us increasingly inactive and this is proving hazardous to our health. For example, inactive people have twice the risk of developing coronary heart disease compared with active people. Inactivity increases the risk of coronary heart disease as much as smoking does.

Inactivity is a serious health problem especially as we know that 7 in every 10 women and 6 in 10 men in the UK are not active enough to achieve health benefits.
What does it mean to be more active?

Being physically active might involve going swimming, doing an exercise class or playing a sport, but it also includes everyday things such as walking, gardening and climbing stairs. You can get the benefits of being more active from all types of physical activity, not just from formal exercise.

Our bodies were made to move!

Why should I be more active?

Being active will make a difference to your quality of life. Once you start, the benefits will become obvious. You'll experience:

- Better health
- More energy – you'll be able to cope with your daily routine and have energy to spare
- Reduced stress – you'll relax more easily and feel better about yourself
- Stronger bones and muscles
- Better balance, strength, suppleness and mobility
- More independence in later life – you'll be able to cope with daily tasks more easily
- Improved sleep
- Better maintenance of a healthy weight
- More social opportunities – you'll meet other people who enjoy being active
- A sense of achievement
- Increased enjoyment – activity can be fun and it's something you could do as a family.

Physical activity improves both your physical and mental health. It is one of the most important factors in maintaining a good quality of life. The heart is a muscle, but it's the most important muscle we've got, and it needs exercise to keep it at its peak so that we can pump blood efficiently with each heart beat.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health problem</th>
<th>How activity can help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coronary heart disease and stroke</td>
<td>Inactivity is one of the major causes of coronary heart disease and stroke in Britain. People who are inactive have twice the risk of developing coronary heart disease compared with active people. Regular activity slows down the narrowing of the arteries to the heart and brain that occurs with age. The more exercise you do, the stronger and more efficient the heart becomes so it can pump more blood with each beat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High blood pressure</td>
<td>Physical activity can help in maintaining a healthy weight and improving blood pressure. Regular activity can also improve heart health and help lower blood pressure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress, anxiety and depression</td>
<td>Being active has been shown to help with each of these. It is a great means of letting off steam and will leave you feeling revitalised and relaxed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe pain from chronic conditions</td>
<td>Although physical activity is not a cure for chronic conditions, it can help in managing pain and improving overall health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2 diabetes</td>
<td>Activity helps you to maintain normal blood glucose levels. Regular activity helps in the prevention and management of diabetes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscular strength and flexibility</td>
<td>Exercise helps to maintain muscle mass and muscle strength. It can also help maintain bone mass, which is crucial for people with osteoporosis or osteopenia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain cancers</td>
<td>Some forms of cancer are less likely to occur in people who are physically active.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart function overload (heart failure)</td>
<td>Exercise can help improve heart function and reduce the risk of heart failure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast cancer and colon cancer</td>
<td>Exercise activity helps to improve mood. It helps reduce stress and may help prevent breast and colon cancer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are already regularly active, you can still benefit by adding more activity. Generally, the more active you are, the more benefits you will get.
Who can benefit from being more active?

Everyone can benefit – whatever your age, size or physical condition. Just remember that you are never too old or too unfit to start doing something. In fact, the greatest increase in health benefit comes to inactive people who start to take regular, moderate physical activity. Your health risks will decrease as soon as you start to do more.

How much do you do already?

How many days of the week do you do something active? Think about activities both at work and in your leisure time. When you are physically active, how much time do you put into it? (Add up all the minutes from all activities). Read on to find out just how much you need to do to ensure health benefits and improve the quality of your life.

How much activity should I be doing?

Any increase in activity will benefit your health but experts agree that all adults should aim to build up to at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on 5 or more days of the week.

Your health risks will decrease as soon as you start to do more.
What does moderate intensity mean?

It means working hard enough to be breathing more heavily than normal and becoming slightly warmer, but not so hard that you are unable to talk and exercise at the same time. If 30 minutes at once seems too much for you at the moment:

- Start with 5 minutes at least three times a day.
- Gradually build up the time and frequency until 30 minutes feels easier. Once 30 minutes is easy try working harder. If you were following a walking programme you could do this by walking more quickly or walking uphill. As you get fitter you will be able to do more and more. Remember that regular moderate activity is better than occasional, vigorous bursts.

30 minutes of moderate physical activity on 5 or more days of the week.

Start slowly at a level that suits you.

Gradually build up the frequency, intensity and duration.

Choose a variety of activities and ones you enjoy.

Try to do something every day.