getting ACTIVE

feeling FIT

a simple guide to ACTIVE living for adults
Everyone wants to feel fit and healthy and to lead an active life. You probably think you are fit - or at least as fit as you need to be. But do you:

- sigh when the lift is out of order?
- panic when your car is at the garage for a couple of days?
- find you just haven't got the energy to do the things you enjoy, like playing with the children, going for walks or doing the garden?

"Taking a bit of time each day for exercise will quickly build up your fitness and give you the energy to enjoy life to the full. And it doesn't have to be hell to be healthy!"

"Just half an hour a day of moderate activity is all it takes. And that means simply doing the things you usually do, but in a way that uses a bit more energy. After just a few weeks you'll notice the difference in how you feel."

Living an active life can give you:

- more energy
- greater stamina
- stronger, more toned muscles
- a lower risk of heart disease and stroke
- a lower risk of osteoporosis (brittle bones)
- improved posture
- improved confidence
- a better shape and appearance.
The best, and safest, way to increase your level of activity depends on how active you are now. Try this short quiz to discover how active you are in your daily life.

**Question One**
- In an average week, do you ever walk briskly enough to raise your heartbeat, make you feel warm and slightly out of breath for more than 15 minutes at a time?
- to the shops or to work instead of using public transport or your car?
- for leisure and recreation?

How much time on average do you spend walking in this way?

**Question Two**
- Do you ever take part in any other physical activity at a moderate intensity for more than 15 minutes at a time? These are activities that would raise your heartbeat, make you feel warm and leave you slightly out of breath. Examples might include leisure activities like:
  - swimming
  - cycling
  - heavy housework
  - digging the garden
  - dancing

What is the total length of time in an average week that you are active in this way?

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**Question Three**
- Do you ever take part in a more vigorous activity or sport? These are activities like jogging that require a higher level of exertion and raise your heartbeat enough to make you sweaty and out of breath.

What is the total length of time in an average week that you do these sessions of vigorous intensity activity?

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**so, how ACTIVE are you?**

**Taking the first step**
If the total level of your activity (all questions) is less than 30 minutes per week, you’re classed as physically inactive.

**Gradual Progress**
If the total of your moderate level activity (Questions 1 and 2) is more than 30 minutes, but you are active on less than 5 days a week, you need to become more active, more often.

**Moving On**
If you are reasonably active and enjoy at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days (Questions 1 and 2) and you already do regular vigorous activity (Question 3), you should continue and intensify your physical activities.
There are many reasons why people find it hard to be as physically active as they’d like to be. These are some you’re likely to hear, together with the comments we’d like to make.

“I’m too tired when I come home from work.”
You may be surprised to find that being more active actually gives you more energy. Try walking or cycling to work and see if you still feel as tired.

“I don’t have the time.”
You don’t have to spend hours in the gym. Building activity into your life, by walking or cycling to get around, can reap rewards.

“I’m too old.”
You’re never too old to feel the benefits of healthy activity. Take up a new activity, but start gently.

“I do enough exercise already.”
Most people overestimate the amount of physical activity that they do, and could benefit from doing more. Take a look at an average week. How often can you say that you do enough activity that leaves you feeling warm and slightly out of breath?

Remember

- You don’t have to be fit to start with
  The most important thing is to build up your level of activity gradually. You’ll soon notice the difference in how you feel.

- You don’t have to leave home to exercise
  There are plenty of activities inside and outside the house that could be an opportunity for exercise, and if you involve your children in your exercise routine, it can be great fun.

- You don’t need to set aside a lot of time for exercise
  Activities can quite easily be introduced into your daily routine, even if you are working. Walking, cycling and jogging can be an alternative to taking the car; a quick trip to the pool at lunchtime or after work can be a good way to exercise and unwind.

- You don’t have to be young
  It’s never too late to take up a new activity. Older people can benefit greatly from physical activity, and often have the time and freedom to pursue a range of interests.
tak[ing the FIRST STEP

For those who have not been physically active for some time, gentle, steady progress is the key. A good way to start is to carry on with your everyday routine, but do things in a way that requires a bit more energy. Then build these activities into your daily lifestyle.

For example, walking is often the best way to begin. Why not:

- Try getting off the bus a stop earlier and walking the rest of the way.
- Leave the car at home one day a week, and walk all (or part) of the way to work.

Try to become a little more active every day. Why not:

- Use the stairs instead of the lift.
- Walk, rather than drive, to the postbox or to the shops.
- Take the family for a regular swimming session.
- Dust off your old bike and cycle round to see a friend.
- At a party, dance to one extra record.

Fit to Start

Are you fit enough to start exercising? Most people are, and could start to increase their level of physical activity immediately, following the guidelines given in this leaflet.

However, if you have had:

- heart trouble
- high blood pressure
- unexplained pains in the chest
- dizziness or fainting
- a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by exercise

Or if you have any worries at all about becoming more active, consult your GP.

"As you get more active, try to make your exercise last a little longer. Your goal is 30 minutes of activity each day; if this is continuous activity, the benefits will be even greater."