

A low-angle, rear-view shot of a person running on a dirt path. The person is wearing a grey t-shirt, black leggings, and red running shoes. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow and long shadows. The background shows tall grass and some trees.

# Physical Activity and our Mental Health

TalkPlus

# Physical activity can have a positive impact on our mental health

Benefits of physical activity can include:

- Improved sleep
- Reduce chance of developing physical health problems
- Help improve physical health problems
- Feel happier
- Give us sense of achievement and pleasure
- Feel less anxious
- Relieve stress
- Weight management
- Improved self perceptions
- Live longer
- Better concentration
- Promote other healthy lifestyle choices and improve negative behaviours (such as smoking, alcohol use, diet)



## **Why is it important to me?**

List your pros and cons of exercising

Pros	Cons

## Types of exercise

**Aerobic exercise** is a form of physical exercise aiming to improve all elements of fitness (flexibility, muscular strength, and cardio-vascular fitness). It combines rhythmic exercise with stretching and strength training routines.

**Strength exercise** includes using weights, body weight exercise, Pilates and yoga.

Moderate activities include some team/ sports (basketball, doubles tennis), water aerobics, brisk walking.

Vigorous activities include sport such as team sport (e.g. football, rugby, hockey), riding a bike uphill, swimming faster or jogging/ running.

## NHS recommendations

NHS recommended weekly amount of activity for adults ages 19– 64 includes at least:

- 150 minutes moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes vigorous aerobic activity or a mix of moderate and vigorous aerobic activity.
- 2 or more days strength exercises, working on major muscle groups.

# Strength training

What is strength training?

Strength training is a type of physical exercise specialising in the use of resistance to induce muscular contraction which builds the strength, anaerobic endurance, and size of skeletal muscles

There are many benefits to strength training such as:

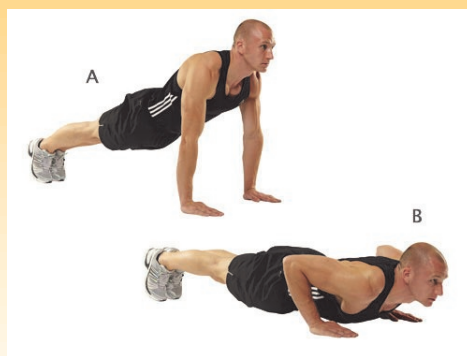
- Improved physical appearance.
- Workouts elevate metabolism
- Improved general physical health
- Strengthens muscles which improves posture, provides better support for joints, and reduce the risk of injury from everyday activities and can avoid some types of physical disability.
- Stimulates the cardiovascular system
- For rehabilitation or to address an impairment
- Increased sports performance
- For the pleasure of the activity!

Strength training can be done using your own body weight, or using weights.

Here are some basic examples of body weight strength training exercise you can do in the comfort of your own home:



Lunge



Press Up



Squat



Plank

**We recommend consulting a personal trainer if you have not use weights for weight training before. Attempting to use weights unassisted or without the correct training and knowledge may lead to injury.**

The NHS website have video modules on Aerobic exercise, strength and resistance, Pilates and yoga and various other fitness plans. These are free to access and can be found at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/?tabname=strength-and-resistance>

## Pain and discomfort

If you experience any pain or discomfort when exercising, this may be a sign you are putting too much pressure on your body, or that you may need to seek medical advice.

Make sure to listen to your body and book an appointment with you GP if you have any concerns.

What activities do you currently do?

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How much exercise do you currently do?

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Are there any forms of exercise you would like to be doing?

.....

## Motivation and opportunity

Motivation and opportunities can cause physical activities more difficult to engage in.

Here we will consider some examples barriers and in what can help overcome these difficulties.

Barrier	Solution
Motivation	Get a friend involved, or join a group—it's a great way to get socialising and social accountability may provide the support you need!
Time	Break it up throughout the week, taking brisk walks in the evenings or in your lunch break, having well planned exercise routines, making the time— getting that balance.
Cost	you don't have to spend money to do exercise, join a park run, create your own home workouts, use YouTube for ideas and exercise
Ability/ physical health	there are so many different types of exercise to get involved in, have a search online for what's available in your local area, or ask your local gym

- What difficulties do you find when engaging in activities, if any?
  
- What could you do to overcome these barriers?

In the table below, list your own barriers and potential solutions .

Be imaginative– there are many ways to problem solve these difficulties

Barrier	Solution



## Getting back to exercise!

If there has been a period of time where there has been a lack of activity, or maybe exercise is something that you have never particularly engaged in. It is important to gradually introduce it to your day to day life.

- Trying too much, too quickly can put our body under pressure and cause injury.
- Studies have also shown that vigorous exercise is less likely to induce positive feelings, for new or returning exercisers. Engaging in activity often comes before motivation and enjoyment...

Here are some tips to help get you started:

- ◆ Start with what your body is already capable of
- ◆ Be realistic!
- ◆ Gradually build on what you can already do
- ◆ It can be really motivational to track progress too to acknowledge how much you have progressed.
- ◆ Find a fun or social activity

Consider what activities you can start with – you may need to begin with lighter exercises, for example:

Light exercise	normal walking, housework, light gardening
Moderate exercise	brisk walking, gentle swimming, cycling, lawn mowing, digging
Vigorous exercise	fast walking, running, cycling, high intensity interval training , competitive sport, circuit weight training

What level of exercise do you think is a realistic starting point for you?

## Other tips and techniques to make getting active that bit easier!

- Preparing the day before e.g. getting sport clothing and equipment ready or booking onto a class the evening before
- 5 minute rules: set yourself 5 minutes of engaging in activity to start with. Often we find once we start we will continue longer than expected!
- Set yourself a goal: This can help with getting that sense of achievement! SMART goals (specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and within a time limit) can be really helpful;– check out our SMART goals video for help and ideas :
  - <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/smart-goals-video-module>
- Make time for exercise– even if it’s a 5 minute walk down the street!
- Planning: if we schedule things in, we can make sure to find the time and will be more likely to carry out these plans
- Joining a group/ club
- Get someone to train you, or a friend to train with
- Involve your family/friends
- Problem solve difficulties/ barriers to getting active
- Warm up and cool down
- Try something new
- Make it a habit– e.g. the same time every week
- Tell others your plans
- Don’t overdo it
- Reward yourself for your achievements!
- Tick what tips may be helpful for you!

Here are some questions to consider that may help get you started:

- What do I want to achieve?
- What goals could I set myself?
- What could help encourage me to exercise?
- Is there anyone who could join me?
- Is there anywhere I could go?
- How do I need to prepare?
- What helpful tips can I use?
- What else might help me achieve my goals?

If we plan things in, we are more likely to do them. Here is a planning diary for you to plan in your exercise and activities.

<b>Date:</b>							
<b>Morning</b>							
<i>What</i>							
<i>Where</i>							
<i>When</i>							
<i>Who</i>							
<b>Mood before:</b>							
<b>Mood after:</b>							
<b>Afternoon</b>							
<i>What</i>							
<i>Where</i>							
<i>When</i>							
<i>Who</i>							
<b>Mood before:</b>							
<b>Mood after:</b>							
<b>Evening</b>							
<i>What</i>							
<i>Where</i>							
<i>When</i>							
<i>Who</i>							
<b>Mood before:</b>							
<b>Mood after:</b>							

It helps to consider the 4 W's

What will I do?

When Will I do it?

Where will I d it?

Who will I do it with?

## Maintaining a Healthy Balance

Just as exercise is important for mental health, there are other important factors that also need to be considered.

**Diet:** Ensure you are eating enough for your body to have sufficient energy. Making the right food choices can impact our mental health also. Maintaining a routine and ensuring to eat breakfast lunch and dinner with a few healthy snacks throughout the day will support your body enough.

**Staying Hydrated:** When exercising it is important to drink fluids in order to reduce becoming dehydrated. Being dehydrated can make you feel dizzy and lightheaded and impact our concentration and focus.

**Rest:** Your body needs to recover from the physical strain it is put under on a daily basis. Additional exercise means your body is working harder. It is important to get sufficient sleep and rest time in order for your body to maintain strength.

Having a healthy balance of exercise, rest, hydration and diet combined will be the most effective outcome!

## **Unhealthy Balance**

Exercise can be a great hobby for various reasons, however it is important to have a healthy balance of activity in your everyday life.

If you have concerns that your physical activities may be being prioritised over other important factors of your life, or you have developed strict rules and routines for the activities you engage in, it can be worth discussing concerns with your GP.

Exercise is healthy when we have a balance.

## Final Tips

- ⇒ Be compassionate with yourself—it takes time to build strength and see results
- ⇒ Plans change at times– don't sacrifice important events for exercise, you can always reschedule
- ⇒ Enjoy what you do! Whether it's the activity itself or the sense of achievement after– make sure you're enjoying what you do!

Further helpful information can be found at:

Recommendation of exercise: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/>

Local sports facilities and clubs: <https://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/home>



The NHS recommends various apps that can support you to improve physical activity engagement.

Here are some of them:

Active 10 walking tracker



BMI calculator



Couch to 5k



iPrescribe Exercise



Sidekick health



Further information on other apps available to support managing health and wellbeing can be found at:

<https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/>

Our TalkPlus website also has various free resources, including video modules on activities: these can be found at :

<https://www.talkplus.org.uk/>