

BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

MAKE MOVES FOR A HEALTHIER YOU

Being active is great for your body and mind in so many ways. Exercise makes a difference to your health so find out how small but positive changes to get moving can add up to big health gains and how you can get started on a regular exercise habit.

GOOD FOR YOUR HEART, GOOD FOR YOUR HEAD

Regular exercise can help to lower blood pressure, cut levels of “bad” LDL-cholesterol, raise levels of “good” HDL-cholesterol and keep you to a healthy weight range. This all helps to reduce strain on your heart, decrease the risk of fatty build-up in your arteries that contributes to heart disease, and may lower your risk of other long-term conditions such as type 2 diabetes and osteoarthritis.

Getting around 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every day (the kind that leaves you puffing but still able to speak comfortably) may also help improve your mental wellbeing. Research shows that exercise encourages the release of endorphins, the body’s natural feel-good chemicals that lift mood and lower stress.

And as long as you’re not exercising strenuously right before bedtime, daily exercise may also help to improve sleep. Research has found that lack of sleep can contribute to stress and other health problems, so being well-rested may help to keep you at your best and ready to face the challenges of the day ahead.

DON’T JUST SIT THERE

Whatever type of sitting you do during the day — whether at a work, in meetings, in cars and on public transport, or relaxing in front of a screen in your downtime — researchers are showing that too much sitting can be harmful to your health.

Australian research found that workers who stood up more often to answer the phone or get a cup of coffee had healthier levels of blood sugar and blood fats than the more prolonged sitters. So if you’re looking to keep healthy and get up off your chair, here are some tips to help you can crank up your activity levels.

- **Get set.** Set your watch or computer to go off every hour or so to remind you to get up and move around for five minutes if you can. Micro-breaks — getting up and moving every 15 minutes or so — appears to reduce body fat and might also help you prevent weight-related diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, arthritis and some cancers.

- **Step up.** Bypass the lift and take the stairs when you can. And get off a bus stop or two early and walk the rest of the way.
- **Stretch out.** Stretching and lengthening the muscles in your neck, shoulders and back can help reduce strain and improve your flexibility. You can help ease the tension at the other end by rotating your feet and twiddling your toes as you sit.

GETTING STARTED

If you haven't exercised for a while, start off slowly before building the amount of exercise you do. The more often you get moving, the easier it gets as you build strength and stamina. Remember to warm up and cool down to prevent injury.

It can take three weeks or more to adopt a new habit so stick with it! Find a few like-minded buddies and get active together. It's a great way to keep your motivation and encouragement. And pick activities you enjoy so you're more likely to stick with it. Whether you decide to start with small movement and build up to a more regular exercise habit, or you're already fit and want to be fitter, start ramping up your moves toward a healthier you — your body and mind will thank you for it!

And if you're pregnant, haven't exercised in a while or have a medical condition, talk to your doctor first about which activities are most suitable for you before starting a new exercise regimen.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Bupa health information
www.bupa.com.au/health

Smartplay
www.smartplay.com.au

Sources:

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Last published: 30 September 2012

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