

Exercise in the future

Improving health

To make improvements to health, it is recommended that we are physically active for at least 30 minutes on five or more days of the week, at a moderate intensity. This may sound like a lot to begin with but you can break this down into more manageable chunks of activity (e.g. 3x10 minutes).

It is important to remember to graduate your activity; if 30 minutes is too much to begin with, start at a level you can manage and build from there.

Making small changes to your lifestyle can lead to big differences in your activity levels; here are some top tips to get you started:

- Set yourself a baseline for how far you can walk - park the car further away and walk the rest.
- Where possible take the stairs instead of the lift.
- Get off the bus one stop early.
- Leave the remote control on top of the TV.
- Build your circuit routine into your daily life.

On the days when you feel discouraged:

- Look back at your handouts and remind yourself of the *benefits* of exercise
- Phone a friend – ask them to come and join you
- Plan a reward. For example, going for a walk might take you to a friend's house. Doing your stretch exercises might include cleaning a window!
- Do an activity that you *enjoy* – it doesn't have to be the circuit of exercises. Close the curtains put on some music you like – *and dance!*

If you want to try something a little different – but still keeping it gentle, try:

- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Pilates
- Use a Swiss ball!
- Use a computer console
- Use DVD's or smart phone application

Increasing fitness

To improve physical fitness you need to do cardiovascular (CV) activity; that is activity that uses the heart and lungs to provide oxygen to the working muscles.

When doing CV activity the FITT principles should be followed.

- **Frequency** – To improve cardiovascular fitness you should aim to do activity on 3 or more days of the week.
- **Intensity** – To improve cardiovascular fitness moderate to vigorous intensity activity is required; exercise that makes you feel warm and slightly puffed but not out of breath. Your heart rate should be around 75% of your maximum or 4-5 on a Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale (see next page).
- **Time** – To improve cardiovascular fitness 20 minutes of continuous activity is required. Remember that if you have not done any activity for some time this may not be realistic to begin with; set yourself a baseline and gradually build up to 20 minutes.
- **Type** – The best types of activity to do to improve fitness are those that involve large muscle groups such as swimming, cycling and walking or gym based exercise on cardiovascular gym machines such as treadmills, bikes, rowers, steppers or X-trainers.

If you want to progress your exercises, you can change any **one** of the above at any one time (if you try to change too much at once it may be too hard to do). Here are some ideas as to how you can do this:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Frequency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of times per week that you are active |
| Intensity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do them a little faster (for cardiovascular fitness) or slower (for muscle strength) • Move a little further • Hold light weights in your hands • Work against resistance e.g. use an exercise band • Hold the end of the movement a little longer • Do more repetitions of each exercise |
| Time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the amount of time you spend on each exercise session |
| Type | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are comfortable with the exercise you are doing, try something different or a little more challenging. |

You have made a start on improving your fitness by doing the stretching and circuit exercises. The most important thing now is to build on this. It doesn't matter **what** you do, it is the decision to do **something** that is the most important.

Remember to follow the guidelines about pacing your activities and set yourself baselines.

Monitoring your exercise intensity

The two methods used to monitor how hard you are exercising are taking your exercising heart rate or by using a Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale.

Heart rate monitoring

One way to monitor the intensity of your activity is to monitor your heart rate. To do this, follow the steps below.

- Calculate your safe maximum heart rate (SMHR) by subtracting your age from 220. For example for a 40 year old:

$$\text{SMHR} = 220 - 40 \text{ (age)}$$

$$\text{SMHR} = 180$$
- Calculate your training heart rate (HR); aim for about 75% of SMHR for fitness improvements.

$$\text{Training HR} = 180 \times 75\% \text{ (} 180 \times 0.75 \text{)}$$

$$\text{Training HR} = 135$$
- Immediately after your exercise take your pulse at either the radial or carotid pulse point. Count the number of beats in 15 seconds (count the first beat as zero) and multiply by 4. This gives you your training heart rate. **It is important to take your pulse as soon as you finish each exercise as your heart rate drops as soon as you stop exercising.**

NB. If you are taking Beta Blockers your heart rate will be suppressed and you should reduce your training heart rate by about 20 beats per minute.

Rating of perceived exertion

This was devised to give an overall perception of exercise intensity from all body systems and has been shown to correlate very well with heart rate. This method is useful because it reduces the need for pulse monitoring and can be used in any exercise environment. The method is particularly beneficial when medications, which have an effect on the heart rate (e.g. beta-blockers), are prescribed.

Assess how you feel on a scale of 1-10 with level 1 being the equivalent of sitting at home as relaxed as possible with no physical effort at all and Level 10 being the maximum effort you could give.

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| VERY LIGHT | 1 |
| FAIRLY LIGHT | 2 |
| MODERATE | 3 |
| SOMEWHAT HARD | 4 |
| HARD | 5 |
| | 6 |
| VERY HARD | 7 |
| | 8 |
| | 9 |
| VERY VERY HARD | 10 |

Tips and Ideas to Help You Become More Active

- **Exercise with a friend** – often exercise can be more enjoyable if you make it a social occasion, and may help motivate you to do it.
- **Involve the family** – a trip to the park can be a rewarding experience for both you and your children. You could walk; play ball games; or even cycle.
- **Do a home exercise programme.** Look out for exercise DVDs or books to help you with this.
- Interactive, **exercise-based, computer games** are becoming increasingly popular and can be a really fun way to be more active.
- Set yourself realistic **goals** and **write them down.**

For example:

Goal: "I will walk to the local shop instead of taking the car"

If you currently drive there every day it may not be realistic for you to start by walking there every day. If you do not achieve this you may feel a sense of failure and lose the motivation to be more active. A more realistic approach may be:

Goal: "I will walk to the local shop instead of taking the car on three days of the week"

At least this way it may be more achievable and you can build up from there.

Writing down your goals and displaying them where you can see them (e.g. on the fridge door) could help to keep you motivated to succeed.

- **Buy a pedometer** – these are relatively inexpensive and can be bought in most major pharmacies or sports shops. A great way to monitor your daily step count and set yourself new targets.
- **Find appropriate exercise near you:**

Health Walks

Health walks exist all over the country and are led by trained walk leaders. They usually vary in the level of difficulty and are often free to attend. They can provide a great social way to enjoy the natural environment.

Information about health walks in your area can be found at:

www.whi.org.uk or from your local council office.

Exercise on Prescription

Ask your GP about exercise referral schemes in your area. These often allow you to undertake a supervised exercise programme at your local gym or leisure centre.

Local Paper

Look in the 'What's on' or 'Community' pages of your local paper to see what exercise classes are available in your area.

Shop Windows

Often, local, independent exercise providers will display posters in shop windows. Keep a look out for these.

Key Points

- Exercise can relate to lifestyle activity, structured exercise or sport, or a combination of these.
- Start at a level that suits you and gradually build up.
- If you try something and you don't like it, don't let that stop you becoming more active - just try something else.
- Review your goals to ensure they are still relevant. If you have achieved what you set out to do, you may need to set new ones if you want to progress further.