

Getting Active

Lack of physical activity is one of the reasons people get heart and circulatory diseases like angina, heart attacks and strokes - so getting your body moving is crucial to improve your heart health. Being more physically active can reduce your risk of heart and circulatory diseases by around 35 per cent.



Physical activity reduces your risk in a number of ways:

- **High blood pressure** - Regular physical activity makes your heart stronger and more able to pump blood around your body with less effort.
- **High cholesterol** - Physical activity raises your levels of good cholesterol which carries away the bad cholesterol, so it is less likely to clog up your arteries and cause a heart attack or stroke.
- **Type 2 diabetes** - Physical activity helps you use up the extra glucose (sugar) in your blood, which can lower your blood glucose levels.
- **Weight loss** - Being more physically active helps you manage your weight by increasing the amount of calories you burn, helping you to lose weight.

Regular activity doesn't just protect your heart. It can help you catch up with friends or meet new people and improve your general health and wellbeing too. You'll have more energy, feel more relaxed, sleep better, improve your memory and concentration and feel more confident.

Always look for ways to get bursts of activity into your day. Strive for 150 minutes of exercise a week.



Getting going is half the challenge. So, if you're thinking about stepping up your activity levels, here are some simple ideas to get you started:

- **Go for a walk** – a brisk walk can make you feel good and it's free. Leave the car at home for those short journeys or get off the bus a stop early.
- **If you're already doing lots of walking**, try increasing the pace (or perhaps try jogging) – even if it's just to the end of the road or to the shop, but build up gradually and take it at your own pace.
- **Take the stairs** - If you're only going one or two floors, give the lift a miss. Climbing the stairs will help you get fit and is a great way to tone your legs and bum!
- **Get out in the garden or go to the park** - Take a football, a frisbee or a bat and ball. You don't need lots of fancy sports equipment to get out and have fun.
- **Swimming is great exercise for all ages** - Discounts and even free sessions might also be available at certain times for older people, children and families.

- **If you want to stay a bit closer to home** - a bit of vigorous vacuuming or gardening can be a great way of getting physical and burning some calories.
- **The power of N.E.A.T** - NEAT stands for Non – Exercise – Activity – Thermogenesis which accounts for the calories you burn on a day-to-day basis doing day-to-day stuff. Increasing the calories you use doing every day activities can really help. Think of taking the stairs instead of the lift, cycling to work rather than driving, walking to get your lunch rather than driving. These are all examples of how you could increase your N.E.A.T doing day to day stuff.
- **Feeling exercise pain** - Many people live with chronic pain, or health conditions exacerbated by exercise. For many people, this puts them off exercising full stop. It is important to try to find suitable alternate exercises that do not place too much stress on areas of injury, or cause any issue with a pre-existing health condition. Yoga, stretching, cycling and bodyweight exercises are often less stressful on our joints than jogging and high intensity interval training (HIIT), so modifying exercise routines is important.
- **Care first Lifestyle Website** - Your Care first Lifestyle site has content dedicated to physical health and wellbeing, including articles and information on warm-ups, stretches you can do whilst working, ways of keeping fit for free and many more.

It's a good idea to do something active every day. Try building up slowly and aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity five times a week. Moderate intensity means you should feel warm and slightly out of breath, but still be able to hold a light conversation during the activity. But remember, any increase in your activity levels is an improvement and means you're already making a good start.

How can Care first help?

If you feel you may need some emotional or practical support, you can contact Care first on the Freephone number. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. Whilst our BACP accredited counsellors are available 24/7 to provide support with emotional issues, our expertly trained Information Specialists are available 8am-8pm Monday-Friday to provide advice on any practical issues that may be causing you a stress or worry and help you feel more in control of a situation.

All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.

Disclaimer. This article is for general information only. We cannot be held responsible for any actions you might take as a result of it. Please seek medical advice before making any significant change to your habits or lifestyle.