

Basketball - health benefits

Basketball is one of the most popular sports in the world and one of the most widely viewed. It is a team sport that involves two teams of five active players each trying to score points against one another by throwing a ball through a 300cm (10 foot) high hoop (the 'basket') under organised rules. It is played on both indoor and outdoor courts.

The size of the court, height of the basket, size of the basketball, and length of time that the game is played, all vary according to the age, size and skill level of players.

Basketball is a fast moving game that involves a lot of variety, including shooting, dribbling, passing, rebounding, defence and much more.

Health benefits

Basketball involves a lot of starting and stopping. While not renowned as an aerobic sport, it is still a great workout that can help you:

- Burn calories (an hour of basketball can burn 630–750 calories)
- Build endurance
- Improve balance and coordination
- Develop concentration and self-discipline
- Build up muscle.

Other benefits

As well as being a great way to stay fit, basketball can also:

- Help you to make new friends and see them regularly
- Teach you about being a good team player
- Be played by people of all ages and all abilities
- Be played all year round because it's usually an indoor sport
- Be a fun game that kids of all levels and ages can enjoy
- Be practised alone – all you need is a net and a hoop (and you can find a hoop in most local parks and school grounds)
- Be played and enjoyed with as few as two people (although official games require 10 players).

Getting started

Although official games of basketball require 10 players, you can play a game of basketball with just one other person. You can also go out and shoot baskets by yourself. If you want to play basketball competitively, you can become a member of a team and get involved in local competition. Check out your local sports centres and associations for information on how to join a team, or start your own.

Getting started – equipment

One of the great things about the game is that apart from having a basketball, you require very little other equipment to play. However, as basketball involves a lot of running and jumping, it can also be wise to have the following:

- Basketball or sports shoes that provide good ankle support

- Mouth guards
- Protective knee and elbow pads.

Basketball and children

Basketball is a great way for kids to get active and have fun. 'Aussie hoops' is a national introductory basketball program for primary school children, started by Basketball Australia and the Australian Sports Commission. It provides primary school girls and boys of all ages, abilities and skill levels, with the opportunity to play basketball and develop sport and social skills in a safe environment.

The program is delivered at local schools, community centres and local stadiums throughout Australia, by local associations and trained professionals. To find your local association, contact Basketball Victoria on (03) 9927 6666.

Some general tips

Suggestions include:

- Adults should check with their doctor before taking up basketball.
- Be aware that basketball is a fast-action game with lots of running, jumping, pivoting and twisting, so injuries and accidents can happen easily.
- Basketball puts a lot of stress on the legs, especially the knees and ankles, and puts pressure on tight shoulders.
- Protect yourself by becoming strong and flexible, as basketball is a very physically demanding game.
- Warm up and stretch your muscles and joints before hitting the court. Also cool down and stretch after playing.
- Make sure you have plenty of fluids on hand and rehydrate regularly.
- Don't overdo it (this will depend on your age and condition). Mix it up with other low-impact sports.
- While playing in a full team competition is great, you can also have fun and benefit from a small space, a basket and a game of one on one.

Where to get help

- Local council
- Local basketball club
- Basketball Australia Tel. (02) 9469 7200
- Smartplay Tel. (03) 9674 8777

Things to remember

- Basketball teaches you about being a good team player and can be a great social sport.
- Adults should check with their doctor before taking up basketball.
- Basketball puts a lot of stress on the body and injuries can happen, so warming up, stretching your muscles and joints, and cooling down is important.
- Make sure you have plenty of fluids on hand and rehydrate regularly.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

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