Exercising for your mental health

If regular exercise is not already a part of your routine, you might be wondering how much you need to do to give your mental health a boost.

The really good news is exercise doesn’t have to be strenuous or take a long time. Studies show a moderate level of exercise is enough. That’s roughly the equivalent of walking fast, but being able to talk to someone at the same time.

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Experts suggest 30 minutes of exercise, at least five days a week, can make a big difference. It can be one 30 minute session, or several shorter 10–15 minute sessions.

How to get started with exercise

It can be intimidating to start exercising if you haven’t done it in a while, but a plan can help you start and stick with it.

Your new exercise plan has a better chance of success if you:

- choose an activity you like, or have enjoyed in the past
- build up your activity gradually
- see your GP or an accredited exercise physiologist before you start, and regularly as you continue your exercise plan
- write your plan in your diary or on your calendar, so it’s part of your schedule.

How to be more active every day

Make exercise part of your everyday activity. Try walking or cycling instead of using the car. Get off a tram, train or bus a stop earlier and walk the rest of the way. Or spend some time walking your kids to school. Get active around the house by doing some gardening, washing the car or cleaning the windows.

Australia’s physical activity and sedentary guidelines can give you more information. The important thing to remember is to move more and sit less every day.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Registered Exercise Professional
- Exercise Physiologist
- Physiotherapist

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SANE Australia

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