Physical activity – overcoming the barriers

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Physical activity – overcoming the barriers

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Tags:
• Keeping active
• Keeping active - Getting started
• Get fit
• Keeping active - Activity plans and challenges
• Keeping active - Staying fit and motivated

Summary

• The best sort of physical activity is the one you enjoy because that is the one that you will maintain.
• Identify your personal barriers to exercise.
• Try to incorporate physical activity into your daily life – for example, take the stairs instead of the lift.
• Find physical activities that appeal to you. Exercise doesn’t have to be dull.

Finding the time and interest to build physical activity into your daily life can sometimes be difficult. We can all come up with lots of excuses to avoid exercise.

Common excuses for being sedentary

There are several common barriers to doing physical activity.

I don’t have enough time

If you feel as though you have no time for physical activity in your day-to-day life, try to:

• Keep a diary of your daily activities for a week. Use the diary to assess how much spare time you actually have – you may have more time than you thought.
• Try to break up your exercise sessions into two 15-minute blocks, or even into three 10-minute blocks, if finding a spare 30-minute block each day to exercise is difficult. You’ll still reap the fitness benefits.
• Involve your family. For example, instead of playing board games or watching television together, go outside. You could play backyard cricket, go to your local swimming pool or take a walk through the park.
• Take a brisk 15-minute walk at lunchtime.
• Try to incorporate physical activity into your daily life. For example, get off the bus or train one stop earlier and walk the rest of the way. Take the stairs instead of the lift.

Exercise is boring

Sometimes lack of interest is the problem rather than lack of time. If you think exercise is boring, try to:

• Exercise with a friend, join a local walking group or take up a team sport. Physical activity doesn’t have to be a solitary pursuit.
• Think back to physical activities you enjoyed as a child. Did you love to rollerskate, ride your bike or jump on a trampoline? Did you play a team sport? Revisit these activities and you may find them just as enjoyable today.
• Change the way you think about physical activity. Don’t think that exercise must be painful or dull in order to be ‘good’ for you. Physical activity is all about getting more movement into your day. The activities should also be fun. Think about pursuits such as dancing, gardening or yoga.
• Mix it up. Plan to participate in a range of physical activities.
• Consider using exercise equipment at home (such as a stationary bike or treadmill) so that you can work out while watching your favourite television programs.

I don’t know how to be active

There are lots of people ready to help you when you’re ready to get moving. Suggestions include:

• See your doctor for suggestions and support when embarking on a physical activity program.
• Contact your local community centre. Most centres offer a range of physical activity classes at modest prices.
• Visit your local gym or sports centre. Most gyms, sporting clubs and dance clubs offer an introductory free first lesson. Take advantage of these free lessons to help find an activity that appeals to you.
• Pick something that really interests you. What sport do you enjoy watching on television? For example, if you never miss the Australian Open, perhaps taking up tennis would interest you.
• Ask any of your physically active friends if you can come along during their next exercise session.
• Learn about a variety of opportunities for physical activity in your area.

I’m too tired

Life can be exhausting but, amazingly, the more active you are, the more energy you will have for everything else. Suggestions include:

• Try to be active on most days of the week and you’ll soon feel more energetic. The fitter you are, the more energy you have.
• Rearrange your schedule if you can, so that you can be active in the morning rather than at night.
• Exercise during your lunch break or build activity into your commute to work by cycling or walking part or all of the way.
• Improve your diet. Healthy foods can boost your energy levels.
• Try to get more sleep.

I don’t feel well, I’m too unfit

There’s something for everyone to do, even if you’re not feeling the best. Sometimes activity can actually help you feel better too. Suggestions include:

• See your doctor for a full medical check-up before starting any physical activity program, particularly if you are obese, over 40, haven’t exercised in a long time or have a chronic medical condition. Your doctor can assist and support you to make changes to your lifestyle.
• Investigate your medical condition. Talk to your doctor or local support group, or browse through Better Health Channel articles to find physical activities that may be appropriate for you.
• Choose an activity that feels comfortable. For example, swimming may be suitable because the buoyancy of the water supports your body.
• Start slowly. Begin by exercising for about 10 minutes every day. Gradually increase the time and intensity as your fitness improves.
• Don’t push yourself too hard. If an activity hurts, decrease the intensity or stop altogether. Pain is a sign that there is something wrong.

It’s too hot, it’s too cold, it’s raining

There’s always something you can do, regardless of the weather. Suggestions include:

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• Have a variety of indoor and outdoor activities to choose from so that weather can’t interfere with your exercise plans.
• Choose indoor activities, such as working out to an exercise video or stationary cycling, on days when you don’t want to exercise outdoors.
• Work out in a gym or swim at your local pool.
• Take a brisk walk through your local air-conditioned shopping centre.
• Choose weather-specific activities such as skiing or snow-play in winter or swimming in summer.

I don’t feel like it

Changing habits isn’t easy, but once you start to feel better you will see the benefits of the changes you’ve made. If you don’t feel like being active, try to:

• Identify your barriers to physical activity.
• Browse through the Better Health Channel and read up on the benefits of physical activity. For example, regular exercise eases depression and anxiety, aids in weight loss, improves sleep and helps to manage back pain. Find personal reasons to motivate you to become more active.
• Choose solitary pursuits such as working out to an exercise video if you feel uncomfortable exercising in front of other people.
• Make sure your goals are reasonable. Avoid the ‘all-or-nothing’ trap of thinking that physical activity is a waste of time if it can’t make you super-fit or super-slim.
• Plan ahead for periods of physical activity. Make appointments with yourself in your diary.
• Find yourself an exercise buddy. You are more likely to commit to regular physical activity if you have someone else relying on you.

Where to get help

• Your doctor
• Local council
• Neighbourhood gym

How to make exercise fun

Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don’t know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off the couch and enjoy getting fit by following these few simple steps.
2. Embrace your inner child

What types of activities did you enjoy when you were a kid? Did you participate in an organised team sport or do something less structured? Give them a try again. Take time out to discover what suits your physical, emotional and social needs.

3. Find an exercise buddy

Let’s face it, we’re more likely to stick to physical activity if we do it with friends or family. It’s a great way to catch up and a great motivator.

4. Explore the local community

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Join a club or community group – it’s a great way to meet new people who may even become lifelong friends. You’ll be surprised how many opportunities are out there – from leisure centres and sports clubs to parks, trails, swimming pools and classes. Local councils and libraries can help you track them down.

Be kind to yourself

Make sure you have a medical check up before starting any form of physical activity, especially if you’re over 40, overweight, haven’t exercised for a long time or have a chronic illness. Fill out this pre-exercise self-screening tool for adults.

Start small

Increase your activity time and intensity gradually. Take extra care if you are new to exercise or haven’t exercised for a while. Start out gently and build your endurance little by little – this way you’ll avoid overdoing it or injuring yourself! It’s a good idea to start with 10 minutes each day at first and then eventually work your way up to 30 minutes or more.
Mix it up

Not only does a range of activities keep your interest up, they challenge different muscles. If you’re time and budget poor, be creative and look for other alternatives. Walk or cycle to work, take the stairs or leave the car at home when running errands. Buy some exercise equipment for home, such as online exercise videos or DVDs. A stationary bike is fun to ride while watching TV.

Up for a challenge?

Keep up your interest by trying new activities. You may like to join others and sign up to a local fitness event, such as a fun run that raises money for a good cause. You’ll not only be helping yourself, but others in the process.
9. **Try a mantra**

Replace ‘no pain no gain’ with ‘no fun no future’. If you are not enjoying yourself, you won’t be able to sustain it.

10. **Be realistic**

Set a mixture of short and long-term goals that are achievable and you can measure. When you first begin, mark dates and times in your diary for exercise sessions. Review your progress regularly and focus on what you have achieved.
11. **Don’t beat yourself up**

If you miss a session that’s okay, even elite athletes need downtime after participating in rigorous activities. If you’re not in the mood, it’s important to focus on how exercise makes you feel – it not only relieves stress but helps fight sadness and depression!

12. **Keep a training diary or journal**

Take time to recognise these little improvements to your daily quality of life – it can increase your motivation. Reflect on how you feel before, during and after exercise. It’s a great way to track your progress.

13. **Reward yourself**

Give yourself a reward each time you reach a fitness goal. It gives you the incentive to keep going. Treat yourself to something you enjoy, but make sure your rewards match
your healthy lifestyle. As you make progress, you may find you end up rewarding yourself with something physical, such as a walk by the beach or river after a hard day’s work!

References

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More information

Keeping active

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- Keeping active basics
- Getting started
- Staying fit and motivated
- Exercise safety and injury prevention
- Healthy eating and exercise
- Keeping active throughout life
- Health conditions and exercise

Keeping active basics

- Balancing energy in and energy out
  A kilojoule is a unit of measure of energy, in the same way that kilometres measure distance.

- Body mass index (BMI)
  Body mass index or BMI is an approximate measure of your total body fat.

- Energy in food (kilojoules and calories)
  A kilojoule is a unit of measure of energy, in the same way that kilometres measure distance.

- Exercise intensity
  If you can talk but not sing, you’re exercising at the right intensity.

- Exercise in your local surroundings (video)
  Want to exercise, but find gyms boring or expensive? Sue Stanley and Shane Bilsborough team up to show you how to exercise indoors and outdoors using your local surroundings - whether it's running up...

- Exercise - the low-down on hydration
  You need to drink enough and regularly to keep hydrated during exercise.

- Exercise with a friend
  Exercise is important for your physical and mental health. Working out with a friend means you’re more likely to have fun and stick to your exercise plan.

- Fitness centres – how to choose one
  Do some research before signing up at a fitness centre.

- How to make exercise fun (slideshow)
  Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don’t know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off...

- Kids and energy needs
  It’s important for kids to eat a wide variety of foods for a healthy, well-balanced diet and to be physically active. Creating healthy habits during childhood helps to ensure lifelong healthy.

- Personal trainers – how to choose one
  Make sure your personal trainer is properly qualified before entering into any agreement.

- Physical activity for men
  Many men are only motivated to become more active after they have a health scare.

- Physical activity for women
  If you can't make the time to exercise for yourself, do it for your family.

- Physical activity - how to get active when you are busy
  Even if you’re busy, you still need to find a way to be physically active.

- Physical activity - it's important
  Just 30 minutes of moderate activity each day can improve your health and reduce the risk of developing certain conditions or diseases.

- Physical activity - setting yourself goals
  When you're trying to become more physically active, set realistic health and fitness goals.

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Physical activity - what's your excuse?
There are many excuses we can come up with to avoid being active, but the truth is there is always a way to fit some physical activity into your day...

Resistance training - health benefits
If you do resistance training repeatedly and consistently, your muscles become stronger...

Secrets to healthy ageing (slideshow)
Experts say the key to living well into our 80s and 90s is making a commitment to live healthily. Check out these simple ideas and embrace your senior years!

Sports and physical activity
Around 62 per cent of Australians adults do not meet the recommended physical activity guidelines to gain the health benefits of increased fitness and reduced body fat.

Getting started

Exercise programs
If you are unfamiliar with what is involved, starting an exercise program can be challenging...

Exercise - the low-down on hydration
You need to drink enough and regularly to keep hydrated during exercise...

Exercise with a friend
Exercise is important for your physical and mental health. Working out with a friend means you’re more likely to have fun and stick to your exercise plan.

Gardening for children
Children can learn new skills, have fun and develop self-confidence when they grow their own plants.

Gardening for health - starting out
Gardening is a healthy activity that can be enjoyed by everyone.

Gardening for older people
Garden spaces and equipment can be modified or adapted to help older people enjoy gardening.

Gardening safety
Gardening is an enjoyable form of exercise, but you need to take care.

Getting active - tucker talk tips
The main thing is to choose physical activities that you enjoy and that you can stick to in the long term.

How to make exercise fun (slideshow)
Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don’t know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off...

Physical activity - choosing a provider
Choosing the right fitness centre or service provider requires some research.

Physical activity - choosing the one for you
You are more likely to keep up a healthy lifestyle change if your chosen activity suits you.

Physical activity for men
Many men are only motivated to become more active after they have a health scare.

Physical activity for women
If you can't make the time to exercise for yourself, do it for your family.

Physical activity - how to get active when you are busy
Even if you’re busy, you still need to find a way to be physically active.

Physical activity - how to get started
If you've been inactive and want to begin physical activity, see a doctor first.

Physical activity - learn how to swim (video)
Swimming is a great low-impact exercise for all ages and abilities. Australian marathon swimmer, Tammy Van Wisse shows ex-AFL (Australian Football League) player and coach, Tony Shaw some swimming.

Physical activity - overcoming barriers (video)
Former world aerobics champion, Sue Stanley shows us how to overcome common exercise excuses.

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Physical activity – overcoming the barriers
If you think physical activity is boring, try exercising with a friend.

Physical activity – setting yourself goals
When you’re trying to become more physically active, set realistic health and fitness goals.

Physical activity – staying motivated
Pick an exercise or fitness activity that appeals to you and suits your lifestyle.

Staying fit and motivated

10 tips to plan your exercise
Physical activity won’t just happen. Most activities require planning – starting and maintaining a physical activity program does too. Here are some tips for getting ready to exercise: Make...

10 tips to stay active year round
Pick an activity you enjoy... 10 tips to stay active year round...

Exercise and mood
Exercise can have an enormous impact on your mood. Not only can exercise help in treating depression, it can also prevent people from becoming depressed again. So it’s important to keep up an exercise...

Exercise – everyday activities
There are lots of everyday activities that provide an opportunity to be active and provide health benefits...

Exercise in your local surroundings (video)
Want to exercise, but find gyms boring or expensive? Sue Stanley and Shane Bilsborough team up to show you how to exercise indoors and outdoors using your local surroundings - whether it’s running up...

Exercise programs
If you are unfamiliar with what is involved, starting an exercise program can be challenging...

Exercise with a friend
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How to make exercise fun (slideshow)
Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don’t know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off...

Pets can make you healthy (video)
Australians have one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world...

Physical activity – choosing the one for you
You are more likely to keep up a healthy lifestyle change if your chosen activity suits you...

Physical activity for men
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Physical activity for women
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Physical activity – overcoming the barriers
If you think physical activity is boring, try exercising with a friend...

Physical activity - staying active during summer (video)
Physical Activity and Fitness Trainer Sherri Bourne gives us some great tips for staying active over the summer months...

Physical activity - staying motivated
Pick an exercise or fitness activity that appeals to you and suits your lifestyle...

Physical activity - what's your excuse?
There are many excuses we can come up with to avoid being active, but the truth is there is always a way to fit some physical activity into your day.

- Stretching exercise in winter (video)
- The amount of physical activity you need

It’s important for your health that you get enough physical activity every day, and that you limit your sedentary behaviour. But getting the amount of physical activity you need doesn’t have to be...

Exercise safety and injury prevention

- 10 tips for safe stretching
- 10 tips to exercise safely
- Aerobics - preventing injury
- Australian rules football - preventing injury
- Basketball - health benefits
- Basketball - preventing injury
- Canoeing and kayaking - health benefits
- Canoeing and kayaking - preventing injury
- Cricket - health benefits
- Cricket - preventing injury
- Cycling - health benefits
- Cycling - preventing injury
- Dance - health benefits
- Dancing - preventing injury
- Dog walking - the health benefits
- Exercise safety
- Fishing - preventing injury
- Golf - health benefits
- Golf provides a stimulating challenge, combined with a healthy walk in pleasant surroundings.

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The average golfer playing an 18-hole game walks about seven kilometres... 

- Heat stress and exercise
  Heat stress occurs when sweat can't evaporate fast enough to keep the body sufficiently cool during physical activity...

Healthy eating and exercise

- Food for sport - tucker talk tips
  Carbohydrate is the most important nutrient for athletes...

- Secrets to healthy ageing (slideshow)
  Experts say the key to living well into our 80s and 90s is making a commitment to live healthily. Check out these simple ideas and embrace your senior years!

- Sporting performance and food
  Good nutrition and a healthy diet are essential to improving your sports performance...

- The amount of physical activity you need
  It’s important for your health that you get enough physical activity every day, and that you limit your sedentary behaviour. But getting the amount of physical activity you need doesn’t have to be...

Keeping active throughout life

- 10 tips for active seniors
  Stay independent for longer with regular exercise...

- Children – keeping them active
  A young child is naturally active, so build upon their inclinations to use their body...

- Exercise and stretching in the office (video)
  Sitting behind a desk all day doesn't mean you can't exercise...

- Gardens for all – a health activity
  Gardening has many health and therapeutic benefits, and is an activity that most people can enjoy...

- Getting active - tucker talk tips
  The main thing is to choose physical activities that you enjoy and that you can stick to in the long term...

- Healthy active Koori kids - tucker talk tips
  Good nutrition and physical exercise help to keep Koori kids healthy and avoid diseases when they get older...

- Healthy ageing – stay involved
  Reach out to the world around you for fun, a sense of achievement, social contact and mental stimulation...

- Healthy and active ageing
  Being physically active, eating well, socialising and improving your health can help you live a healthy, happy and active life as you get older...

- How to make exercise fun (slideshow)
  Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don’t know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off...

- How to volunteer and boost your health (slideshow)
  Volunteering is great for our health – it makes us feel good, while helping others in the process...

- Older people in hospital – Get well soon
  Learn about improving and maintaining your health during a hospital stay...

- Parent's guide for active girls
  Physical activity is an important part of health and wellbeing, and girls should remain active as they grow up...

- Physical activity for men
  Many men are only motivated to become more active after they have a health scare...

- Physical activity for seniors – staying active during summer (video)
  Physical Activity and Fitness Trainer - Sherri Bourne shares a few easy and low-impact ways for seniors to stay healthy over the summer months...

- Physical activity for women
  If you can't make the time to exercise for yourself, do it for your family...

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Physical activity - what's your excuse?
There are many excuses we can come up with to avoid being active, but the truth is there is always a way to fit some physical activity into your day...

Postnatal exercise
Always consult with your doctor or midwife before starting any postnatal exercise program...

Pregnancy and exercise
Unless you have complications, you should be able to exercise throughout your pregnancy...

Secrets to healthy ageing (slideshow)
Experts say the key to living well into our 80s and 90s is making a commitment to live healthily. Check out these simple ideas and embrace your senior years!

Sport and children
Make sure that some family outings offer opportunities for physical activity, such as playing sport together...

The amount of physical activity you need
It’s important for your health that you get enough physical activity every day, and that you limit your sedentary behaviour. But getting the amount of physical activity you need doesn’t have to be...

Vision loss and sport
Many sports can be adapted to suit people who are blind or have low vision.

Walking for good health
Walking will improve your fitness and reduce your risk of heart disease...

Walking - the benefits for older people
Walking is great exercise for older people. It has a range of health and social benefits, and most people can do it...

Health conditions and exercise

- Arthritis and exercise
  Exercise can reduce some of the symptoms of arthritis, and improve joint mobility and strength.

- Asthma and exercise
  Exercise-induced asthma can be prevented with medication and by preparing for exercise and physical activity.

- Breathing problems and exercise
  A little physical activity and some breathing exercises can help people with lung disease.

- Cancer - exercise to help you cope
  People with cancer should be as physically active as their abilities and condition allow.

- Dementia - reducing your risk
  Adopting a 'brain healthy' lifestyle may reduce your risk of dementia in later life.

- Diabetes - issues for children and teenagers
  Many parents worry when their child with diabetes starts or returns to school.

- Epilepsy and employment
  Many people living with epilepsy are successfully employed across a range of professional fields.

- Epilepsy and exercise
  It is rare for a person with epilepsy to have a seizure during physical activity, but you should always take safety precautions when exercising.

- Exercise and mood
  Exercise can have an enormous impact on your mood. Not only can exercise help in treating depression, it can also prevent people from becoming depressed again. So it’s important to keep up an exercise...

- Exercise in your local surroundings (video)
  Want to exercise, but find gyms boring or expensive? Sue Stanley and Shane Bilsborough team up to show you how to exercise indoors and outdoors using your local surroundings - whether it's running up...

- HIV, hepatitis and sport
  People with HIV or hepatitis B or C participate in a wide range of sports without restrictions, and the risk of transmission to another player is extremely small.

- Menstruation - athletic amenorrhoea
  Women who are athletes or who exercise a lot on a regular basis are at risk of developing athletic amenorrhoea, which is the absence of periods.
Osteoporosis and exercise

Exercise can reduce the risk of fractures resulting from osteoporosis by both slowing the rate of bone loss, and reducing the person’s risk of falling by building muscle strength and improving balance.

Sports injuries

A sports injury may be more severe than you think.

Type 2 diabetes - healthy eating and exercise (video)

People with type 2 diabetes talk about positive lifestyle changes that improve their quality of life.

Related Information

- Older people in hospital – Get well soon
  Learn about improving and maintaining your health during a hospital stay...
- Physical activity - staying motivated
  Pick an exercise or fitness activity that appeals to you and suits your lifestyle...
- Physical activity – setting goals
  When you're trying to become more physically active, set realistic health and fitness goals...
- Physical activity – choosing one for you
  You are more likely to keep up a healthy lifestyle change if your chosen activity suits you...
- Physical activity – how to get started
  If you've been inactive and want to begin physical activity, see a doctor first...

Related information on other websites

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Physical Activity.
- Victoria Walks.

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Last updated: June 2015

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