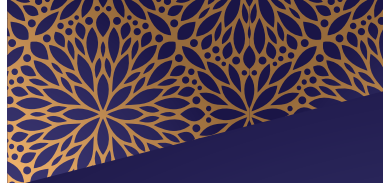


How much exercise is best?

Only about half of us get anything like the amount of exercise we need for good health. The good news is that we don't have to go in for heroics, becoming pavement-pounding joggers or perspiration drenched gym junkies, to get the minimum exercise needed for good health.

Even moderate daily exercise has important benefits for physical and mental health. It reduces the risk of many health problems, such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, anxiety, depression, musculoskeletal problems, some cancers and unhealthy weight gain.



Getting Enough Exercise to Stay Healthy

Dr John Ashfield PhD



- Doing any physical activity is better than doing none. If you currently do no physical activity, start by doing some, and gradually build up the amount.
- Do muscle strengthening activities on at least two occasions each week.
- Minimise the amount of time spent sitting (break up times of sitting as often as possible).
- Start out gently (for example, by walking), without overexertion, and gradually build up your exercise. Even three 10-minute bouts of exercise each day will do, so long as it's of moderate intensity – which means it should cause a slight but noticeable increase in breathing and heart rate.
- Be active on most, preferably all days every week.

What kind of exercise is best?

Well the choice is yours, but what's easy and doesn't require any equipment – except suitable footwear, is brisk walking. Of course, mowing the lawn, swimming, cycling and other forms of exercise are fine, so long as they elevate both your breathing and heart rate. You'll know you've got this about right if you can talk but not sing. If you also want to achieve fitness or avoid weight gain, then you'll have to work harder at your exercise.

It's easy to kid ourselves that we are more active than we are, simply because we arrive home exhausted. But exhaustion is not the same as exertion. And, in fact, we might feel a good deal less tired if we got more exercise. It's also easy to make excuses not to exercise, the classic being: 'I just don't seem to have the time'. Well it's all a matter of priorities. How important is your health?

Most people manage to watch an average of around two hours of television each day. Even if you don't, earmarking 30 minutes for exercise amongst other recreational activities represents only a small adjustment, and is a great investment in your health. Remember, think of daily physical activity as an opportunity, not an inconvenience. Try to be active every day in as many ways as you can; regularity is vital. Build exercise into your daily routine. For extra health and fitness, get more exercise or make it more vigorous. If you have a medical condition, first get some advice from your doctor about the best form and level of exercise for you.

