

Benefits of Exercise

Exercise is good for you! All individuals respond differently to exercise even when participating in the same program. Benefits that may occur with regular, consistent aerobic, resistance, and flexibility exercise are listed below.

Exercise improves:

- Enhanced well being
- Weight control
- Body composition: less fat, more muscle
- Muscle tone and strength
- Sleep patterns
- Flexibility
- Heart and lung function
- Skin tone, youthful appearance
- Productivity
- Overall quality of life

The health benefits of exercise

Reduction of:

- Risk for heart disease and premature death
- Risk for stroke
- Risk of developing diabetes
- Body weight or body fat, lowering your BMI. BMI stands for Body Mass Index. It is a numerical value used in most clinical settings to determine if a person is underweight, normal weight, overweight, or obese. BMI provides a more accurate measure of total body fat than the assessment of body weight alone. Increased BMI is associated with an increase in morbidity and mortality
- Risk for osteoporosis
- Depression and anxiety

Exercise also:

- Prevents/helps control high blood pressure
- Prevents/helps control high cholesterol
- Builds and maintains healthy bones, muscles, and joints
- Promotes a younger and healthier body
- Helps you manage stress more effectively
- Provides an easy way to share activities with family and friends and an opportunity to meet new friends

What are the recommendations?

Thirty to sixty minutes of moderate intensity activity, or activity that causes increases in breathing and heart rate, is recommended on most, if not all days of the week.

If you have an underlying medical condition such as a heart disorder, high blood pressure, lung conditions, asthma, arthritis, or osteoporosis you should meet with your GP or a Sports Medicine specialist prior to starting any new exercise program. This is to help to make it safer for you to exercise. Customised programmes for you can also be devised.

It is also recommended that you do some simple weight training exercises. See our **basic guidelines** to help you with this.

For the reluctant exerciser: how to make it work

The key to success in any exercise program or plan is to find activities that you enjoy and that you will want to participate in. Once you have found an activity you enjoy, it will become much easier to gain the benefits associated with regular exercise.

Identify the barriers that you think are preventing you to being active:

How to Approach Perceived Barriers

Reason:	How to get past it:
I do not have time.	Can't you afford three 30 minute sessions each week? How much TV do you watch? You can split the sessions into 10 minute portions – e.g. going for a brisk walk at lunch time.
I am usually too tired to exercise.	Regular activity will improve your energy level. Try and see for yourself.
The weather is too bad.	There are many indoor activities!
Exercise is boring.	Listening to music during your activity keeps your mind occupied. Get a friend to join you. Join a class. Walking, biking, or running can take you past lots of interesting scenery.
I do not enjoy exercise.	Do not "exercise." Start a hobby or an enjoyable activity that gets you moving.
I get sore when I exercise.	Slight muscle soreness after physical activity is common when you are just starting. It should go away in 2 to 3 days. You can avoid this by building up gradually and stretching after each activity.

Tips to ensure that you stick with your regime and get progressively fitter:

- Set easily achievable short and long term goals, and reward yourself when you achieve them.
- Don't try to achieve too much too soon
- If you are trying to lose weight, don't calorie restrict too much or you will be too tired and hungry to be active
- Don't talk yourself out of it: "Just Do It"!
- Do things you enjoy and don't get stuck doing the same thing over and over again – variation is the spice!

Risks of exercise

The benefits of exercise usually greatly outweigh the risks. However, if you have cardiac, pulmonary complaints or arthritis you may need assessment prior to starting, in particular if you wish to do strenuous activity.

The most common adverse effect of exercise is musculoskeletal injury. Most injuries are preventable, but if you do develop an injury, attend to it early and get advice if necessary.