

# exercise, physical activity and mental health

Did you know, to improve mood alone, as little as 10 minutes of exercise can be beneficial?

Exercise improves your mood and sense of wellbeing by reducing levels of the body's stress hormones and helps bump up the production of your brain's "feel-good" neurotransmitters.

Exercise can be a positive distraction, provide opportunities to be more social, can increase self-confidence, provide a sense of accomplishment and improve concentration. All of these exercise benefits can ease your stress levels and give you a sense of command over your body and your life.

Physical activity and increased fitness also has the power to improve so many aspects of your health, regardless of your body composition, age, gender and weight. Compliance with physical activity guidelines can improve your cardio metabolic health, muscle functioning, energy levels, mood, sleep quality, self-esteem and so much more!

## The facts and guidelines:

- **Physical activity** is bodily movement produced by your muscles that requires energy to perform.
- **Exercise** is planned activity to improve a component of fitness.
- Aim for 150-300 minutes of moderate OR 75-150 minutes of vigorous intensity activity OR an equivalent amount of both
- Include aerobic activities on most days
- Include strengthening exercises 2-3 days per week
- Minimise time spent being sedentary by breaking up long periods of sitting as often as possible

## The best activity for improving overall mental health:

- 10 or more minutes at a time
- Wherever and whenever you are comfortable
- Any activity that is enjoyable and meaningful to you!

# choosing the right goals

There's more to becoming more physically active than just weight control. Finding movement that you enjoy will help you to become physically active without pressure, emotional torment, overexercising, and injuries.

Choosing goals around changing your thoughts or behaviour, finding pleasure in being active and looking after your overall physical health are important and can promote longer term engagement in physical activity over the lifetime.

## who can I talk to?

To get individualised and up-to-date advice, ask your doctor for a referral to see an Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP).

AEPs are university-qualified professionals that undertake ongoing training and education programs. AEPs have the knowledge and skills to give specific exercise advice, ensuring that you receive tailored and credible exercise information.

## a few ideas in the following list may appeal to you when you set your goals:

- You don't need to be 'fit' to start exercising. Start slowly and gradually build up the amount and intensity of physical activity you do
- Include a variety of activities in your routine to keep things interesting
- Activity should be tailored to your interests, goals, routine and capabilities
- Consider breaking up sitting time
- Exercise does not have to be difficult, think about ways it can fit into your daily life
- Consider ways to increase incidental activity; the physical activity that comes with performing routine daily activities, like climbing the stairs, standing up to turn on the T.V or walking to the bus stop
- You don't need a gym membership to exercise! Try a range of activities to find out what you most enjoy
- Try exercising with family or friends
- Research access to community groups or sports
- Try outdoor activities in environments you feel comfortable
- Be flexible with your exercise regime to find balance across the week
- Set short term achievable goals, be realistic and remember consistency is key!



**If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)**

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**If you need immediate assistance call 000 or speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.**

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