

Tips and advice on keeping fit and healthy

Why exercise?

Exercise is beneficial in many ways: here are just a few reasons why keeping fit is good for you.

- Statistics show a reduction in heart disease and an improved cardiovascular system in people who take regular exercise.
- Lower cholesterol levels can be better maintained with routine exercise.
- Regular exercise improves body strength and flexibility. Muscle activity strengthens joints, ligaments and the muscles themselves. Joints and muscles benefit by being moved through their full range of movement.
- Bone strength (bone mineral density or BMD) is improved with weight-bearing exercise such as walking, running or aerobics.
- Sport and exercise is a good stress reliever and promotes better all-round physical and psychological wellbeing.
- Exercise is an 'energiser' and improves a person's capacity for physical work.
- Regular exercise will assist with weight control. A small amount of exercise (such as a walk) each day can result in slow, steady weight loss.
- Some medical conditions such as asthma and diabetes are better controlled when regular exercise is taken. (Always consult your GP first if in doubt.)
- Exercise improves bowel function and may help reduce the risk of bowel cancer (the third most common form of cancer in the UK).

What type of exercise should I do?

Make sure that the exercise you choose will give you the benefits you require. For example, swimming is an excellent form of exercise for improving cardiovascular fitness, but has no effect on

strengthening bones. Be realistic about the time and effort required. Choose an exercise that will become part of your regular routine. If your time is limited and you are unable to participate in a regular exercise routine, find alternative ways to keep fit which you can incorporate into your daily routine, such as walking up stairs instead of taking the lift; walking to a colleague's desk rather than emailing; cycling or walking to work or to the station; and taking a walk during your lunch break.

Handy exercise tips

- Always begin exercise slowly. A warm-up should take 2-3 minutes, should make you break into a mild sweat and get you slightly out of breath.
- Don't undertake sudden, vigorous exercise.
- Pay attention to any persistent discomfort or pain and seek medical attention if necessary.
- Exercise does not cause arthritis. Weight-bearing exercise actually helps in maintaining healthy joints.
- Be realistic if you have a medical condition. Speak to your GP if in doubt about the suitability of an exercise.
- Avoid the temptation to over-train. Allow sufficient rest time to enable soft tissues to recover.

