



# Physical activity and the benefits to your physical and emotional wellbeing

You may already know how important physical activity is for your physical health, but have you considered how it could benefit your emotional wellbeing and productivity?

When you're active, your body releases chemicals such as endorphins into your brain which makes you happy. These chemicals also help you concentrate, feel and look better and even sleep better.

## Benefits of physical activity



**Improves sleep:** exercise helps regulate your sleep patterns. Insomnia is commonly linked with anxiety and depression, and exercise has strong effects on reducing these symptoms in the general population.



**Reduces stress and negative thoughts:** exercise can help to reduce your cortisol levels which is your body's stress hormone.



**Improves energy levels:** every time you exercise and your heart rate increases, you give your body a jolt that increases your energy levels



**Improves your mood:** increases endorphins and serotonin levels by releasing chemicals which result in an improved mood



**Sharper memory and focus:** the same endorphins that make you feel better also help you concentrate and feel mentally sharp

**! Tip:** You can make up 30 mins of exercise by combining shorter 10 to 15 mins sessions throughout the day

## How much physical activity should you do?



The Australian government guidelines recommend adults do at least 30 minutes of moderate to intensive physical activity on most or all days of the week.

## Tips to increase daily physical activity



**Start Small:** add 5% to what you're currently doing. Continue with small changes to your routine. For example, if you catch public transport to work, you may choose to get off 1 stop early and walk the rest of the way.



**Do something you enjoy:** if you dislike running or going to the gym, why not try a yoga class or an alternative sport that will make exercise enjoyable for you.



**Make it part of your daily routine:** plan your exercise into your weekly schedule to keep yourself accountable. For example, waking up 30 minutes earlier 3 times a week to exercise.



**Get an exercise buddy:** you're less likely to opt out if you have a friend or team relying on you to be there. You could even try an online or virtual class with a friend.

## Additional tips for staying motivated when you may be struggling with your emotional wellbeing

- **Focus on activities you enjoy:** any activity that gets you moving counts. These could include gardening, throwing a frisbee or walking your dog.
- **Be comfortable:** wear clothing that's comfortable and choose a setting that's right for you. Examples include a scenic path, a gym or even your living room.
- **Reward yourself:** this will help to keep you motivated. Treat yourself with a bath after your workout or a delicious meal/smoothie.

***Physical activity isn't only good for your physical health. The science shows that physical activity increases concentration, memory, learning, creativity and lowers stress.***

### Additional resources

If you or someone you know may need assistance, please refer to any of the below help lines or additional resources:

- The Black Dog Institute – information on emotional wellbeing and benefits of exercise – [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)
- SA Health – information on the beneficial effects of walking on mood
- Beyond Blue – exercise your way to good mental health – 1300 224 636
- Better Health – exercise and mental health – [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)
- Your workplace EAP (line open 24/7) – 1300 687 327
- Health for Life hub for detailed fact sheets and activities for you and the family

Resources upon request.