

# EXERCISE AND YOUR MOOD

Many of us suffer with stress, anxiety or depression at some time in our lives. Being active can help. Building regular activity into your day to day life, both at work and at home, can help to lift your mood and help you to feel more able to deal with your problems. As well as being fun and improving your physical health, being active can also give you a sense of mental wellbeing.

The benefits of being active start straightaway. Just one session can lower stress levels and once you become regularly active you will start to feel better about yourself and more confident. The more activity you do the better you'll feel.

## Regular activity can help you to:

- Sleep better
- Reduce tension and stress
- Feel more energetic
- Get motivated
- Meet other people

### Did you know?

Regular activity may help to release a chemical that gives you a natural 'high' - making you feel happier and improving your mood.

## How do I get started?

It can be difficult to start if you're feeling low, but once you get going you'll reap the benefits. The ideal amount of activity to do is half an hour or more, on at least five days each week. This can seem a lot if you're not used to exercise, so start with short sessions of ten minutes each and build up to longer sessions. Try these tips:

- Find ways to be more active in your day to day life. So for example, take the stairs instead of the lift, walk up escalators, go for a walk in your lunch break.
- Set yourself some achievable goals, that way you can see how much progress you have made.
- Choose activities that suit you – if you want to meet new people choose a team sport. If you feel self conscious start with some walking or a fitness programme that you can do at home.
- Don't forget that being active should be fun and enjoyable – find something that you like to do.
- Be sociable – find a friend to take up an activity with, play games with your children or join a club or gym.
- Any activity that gets your heart rate up and gets you slightly out of breath counts. So, cleaning the car or doing the housework all helps so long as you do them briskly.

The more active you become, the better you will feel both mentally and physically. You will become more confident and motivated and feel more able to deal with the problems life throws at you.

If you are very overweight, haven't done any proper exercise before or for a long time, or have any health problems which could be worsened by sudden exercise, check with your GP or practice nurse or call NHS Direct (details below).

## For more information:

### MIND

UK mental health charity  
[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)  
 0845 766 0163

### Depression Alliance

UK charity for people affected by depression  
[www.depressionalliance.org](http://www.depressionalliance.org)  
 0207 633 0557

### NHS Direct (England and Wales)

Health information web site and telephone service  
[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)  
[www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk)  
 0845 4647

### NHS 24 (Scotland)

[www.nhs24.com](http://www.nhs24.com)  
 08454 24 24 24

### British Heart Foundation

Active at Work – a web site and materials to help you get fit at work  
[www.bhf.org.uk/thinkfit](http://www.bhf.org.uk/thinkfit)  
 08450 70 80 70