

Moving More

SELF-CARE FORUM FACT SHEET NO. 27

Why being active matters

Staying active is one of the best things you can do for your health. It's free, natural medicine - and the benefits start straight away.

Being active can:

- Lift your mood, boost self-esteem, and reduce stress
- Improve sleep and increase energy.
- Lower your risk of serious health conditions including:
 - Heart disease and stroke
 - Bowel and breast cancer
 - Depression and dementia
 - Type 2 diabetes
 - Falls, fractures and arthritis
 - Early death (before 75y)

Aim for:



OR



How much should I do?

Move every day.

- Aim for:
 - **150 minutes of moderate activity a week** (eg brisk walking)
 - **Or 75 minutes of vigorous activity a week** (eg running)
 - **Or a mixture of both**
 - **Spread activity across the week e.g. 30 minutes on 5 days**
- **Limit sitting.** Get up regularly if you've been sitting or lying down.

- **Strengthen muscles** at least 2 days a week (working on arms, legs, back, stomach, chest, shoulders).
- **Include balance and flexibility** such as tai chi, yoga, Pilates - especially when older to help reduce falls.
- **People over age 65** should do at light activity every day and exercises that improve balance and flexibility 2 days a week.

What counts as activity?

Moderate activity - you feel warmer, breathe faster and can talk but not sing:

- Brisk walking
- Easy cycling
- Pushing a lawn mower
- Aerobics, yoga, or Pilates (moderate effort)

Vigorous activity - you're breathing hard and can only say a few words:

- Running
- Swimming
- Hiking uphill
- Dance or fitness classes
- Fast cycling or uphill cycling
- Martial arts

Strengthening activities

Work your muscles until you need a short rest

- Carrying heavy shopping bags.
- Resistance bands, yoga, Pilates, Tai chi
- Wheeling a wheelchair
- Working with resistance bands
- Lifting and carrying children
- Heavy gardening, e.g. digging and shovelling
- Body-weight exercise e.g. push-ups, planks and sit-ups.



Getting started

- Do something every day - even light movement helps.
- Build up gradually - don't overdo it at first
- Choose activities that feel right for your health and fitness
- Brisk walking is a simple way to begin, try 20 minutes daily or 30 minutes 5 times a week
- Talk to your GP first if you haven't exercised for a while, or if you have health concerns

Making it stick

It's common to plan activity but not follow it through. Try these tips:

- **Buddy up** – a partner or class keeps you motivated.
- **Set reminders** – apps, alarms or daily notes help you show up.
- **Make a routine** - same time, same place, every day or week.
- **Set cues** – keep trainers by the door or a water bottle on your desk.
- **Shape your environment** – make the active choice the easy choice.

Tracking your activity

- **Minutes matter.** Aim for at least 150 moderate minutes each week.
- **Steps help too.** Aim for about 7000 steps a day (even small increases help, eg 2000 - 4000)
- **Use a phone**, watch, or simple pedometer to track steps or time.

Everyday activity for over 65s

Light activity keeps you strong and confident on your feet, examples:

- **Standing up, moving around your home.**
- **Making the bed, vacuuming, light housework.**
- **Walking slowly, dusting, pottering in the garden**
- **Standing on one leg while brushing your teeth, to practise balance.**

Apps to try

- NHS couch to 5k - builds up running in 9 weeks.
- NHS Active 10 - tracks brisk 10 minute walk



Where to find out more

- [Visit the NHS website exercise pages](#) have videos, tips and downloadable guides.
- **Join your local Parkrun.** It's a free, community event where you can walk, jog, run, volunteer or just watch. It takes place every Saturday morning. There is no time limit and no one finishes last. Everyone is welcome.

Tip: You don't need specialist kit, a gym, or expensive gadgets. Start small, keep going, and it soon becomes part of everyday life.