

The Benefits of Exercise

Tutor's Handbook



The Benefits of Exercise

Introduction

The aim of this handbook is to present some of the main benefits of including regular exercise and physical activity in your daily or weekly routine. We may be aware of the benefits of exercise for weight loss, for example, but there are other benefits that might initially be less obvious. Through this handbook and the digital resource, we aim to outline some of the strongest arguments for including exercise in your routine, and for encouraging members of your local health network to exercise more regularly as well. Think of how much healthier your community would be if exercise was a regular habit!

The Benefits of Exercise

While many factors such as our age, sex, lifestyle, family history, etc. can impact our overall health, none of these factors matter when it comes to exercise. Regardless of how old you are, how little you exercise, whether you're male or female, if you begin to exercise regularly, you will enjoy the following benefits:

- **Less Stress:**

Did you ever see those busy professionals who are busting a gut in the gym at 7.00am or 7.00pm? They are exercising to de-stress! Exercise is a great means of switching off from the pressures of everyday life. Immersing yourself in

exercise for a timebound session each day or several times a week can be just the thing you need to relieve stress from your life.

- **Strengthens bones and muscles:**

Exercise plays a key role in building and maintaining strong and healthy muscles and bones. As people age, they tend to lose muscle mass and function, which can lead to injuries, etc. Practicing regular physical activity is essential to reducing muscle loss and maintaining strength as you age. Exercise also helps to build bone density when you're younger, in addition to helping prevent osteoporosis later in life. High-impact exercise, such as gymnastics or running, or odd-impact sports, such as soccer and basketball, have been shown to promote a higher bone density than non-impact sports like swimming and cycling

- **Helps us to relax:**

Physical activity stimulates various brain chemicals that may leave you feeling happier, more relaxed and less anxious. When we exercise, our bodies release endorphins which are natural mood enhancers. Endorphins play a role in the brain's natural reward system. These 'feel good' chemicals released after exercise can help us to feel more relaxed.

- **Weight loss and management:**

Exercise is an essential part in maintaining a healthy weight. People who exercise regularly tend to have lower BMIs than those who lead a sedentary lifestyle. While

exercise can be a good boost to people seeking to lose weight, it can also be used to regulate calorie intake and burning so that people can maintain a healthy weight. Exercise can help prevent excess weight gain or help maintain weight loss. When you engage in physical activity, you burn calories. The more intense the activity, the more calories you burn.

- Improves heart health:

Regardless of your weight or health history, whether you are worried about heart disease or cholesterol, for example, regular exercise improves your heart health! How? Being active boosts high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, the "good" cholesterol, and it decreases unhealthy triglycerides. This means that exercise helps to keep your blood flowing smoothly, which decreases your risk of cardiovascular diseases.

- Reduces risk of other illnesses and diseases:

Regular exercise helps prevent or manage many health problems and concerns, including:

- Stroke
- Metabolic syndrome
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Many types of cancer
- Arthritis
- Falls (causing injuries)

- Promotes better sleep:

If you are struggling to get to sleep at night, if you find that you lay awake with your mind racing, one remedy might be to include more exercise in your routine. Regular physical activity can help you fall asleep faster, get better sleep and deepen your sleep.

Getting Started

So, now that we know all of the benefits of exercising, the next question is, how and where do we start? While regular sessions in the gym or fitness classes are great, it may not always be feasible to find 1-2 hours per day to include this amount of exercise. Don't worry and remember – any exercise is better than no exercise! To reap the benefits of exercise, just get more active throughout your day — take the stairs instead of the elevator, walk to the shop instead of driving, perform household chores with more vigour than usual – the changes don't have to be drastic, but consistency is key! The benefits of regular exercise will only be felt if the exercise is regular! So, work out an exercise plan that fits easily within your daily and weekly routine, and then commit to it.

How Much Exercise?

We've made the point that regular exercise has to be regular – but how regular is 'regular'? The answer is that on average, adults and young children needs to exercise 30 minutes per day, adolescents

and teenagers need 60 minutes of moderate physical activity per day. Official guidelines from health bodies recommend:

- At least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes a week of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity.

The guidelines suggest that you spread this exercise throughout the week.

Examples include running, walking or swimming. Even small amounts of physical activity are helpful, and accumulated activity throughout the day adds up to provide health benefits.

- Strength training exercises for all major muscle groups at least two times a week.

Examples include lifting free weights, using weight machines or doing body-weight training.

How to use this Resource with your Local Health Group?

This handbook presents some introductory information on the benefits of regular exercise for our health. To use this resource with your local group, we recommend that you first play the short video lecture and then lead a group discussion about the benefits of exercise and how much exercise everyone should be getting.

To accompany this handbook, you will also find a short PowerPoint presentation that can be used with your local health network to introduce the benefits of regular exercise. This presentation gives some of the basic information that is included in this handbook. Use the presentation to talk to the members of your local group about their exercise routines, whether or not they were aware of the benefits of regular exercise and how they could incorporate exercise into their routines.

Group Activity

Once you have shared the digital resource and the PowerPoint presentation with your group members, you can start a group discussion about the exercise routines of people in the group. To start this discussion, pose the following questions to the group:

- Where you aware of the benefits of regular exercise?
- How often do you exercise?
- What exercise do you do?

After this discussion, ask all group members to work on their own or in small groups to consider how they could incorporate the required 150 minutes of exercise into their weekly routines. For this they can list the type of exercise they enjoy, and then make a weekly planner to fit in when they can exercise. They are asked to follow this plan for one week and to come back to the next session and share their experience.



ON CALL

Lay Community Health Advisors



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