Leicestershire Nutrition and Dietetic Services

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
A guide for getting the most out of being active

This leaflet provides information on:

- The health benefits of being active
- The different types of physical activity
- The recommendations for physical activity
- Practical tips on how to increase your physical activity

Before you read on …

If you have been advised to limit your physical activity for medical reasons, or you have any doubts as to how much or what type of physical activity you can safely do, contact your Doctor before making any changes

When doing any physical activity make sure you
- warm up properly by doing some gentle activity and stretching
- wear appropriate, comfortable clothing and shoes
- make sure you drink enough to keep you hydrated

The Health Benefits of Being Active

Regular physical activity can increase your quality of life and wellbeing by helping you to manage your weight and to:

✓ Sleep better at night and feel more alert during the day
✓ Meet new people and socialise
✓ Relieve stress
✓ Feel slimmer and more toned
✓ Keeps your joints mobile and bones strong
✓ Lower your blood pressure
✓ Lower your blood cholesterol level
✓ Reduce your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes
✓ Maintain good blood glucose control if you have diabetes
✓ Reduce your risk of developing heart disease
✓ Reduce your risk of dying from a 2nd heart attack
✓ Reduce your risk of having a stroke
✓ Reduce your risk of developing osteoporosis
✓ Reduce your risk of developing bowel cancer
✓ Increase your stamina and general level of fitness
✓ Feel more positive and energetic
Being Active to help Your Weight

Doing regular physical activity is important for achieving & maintaining weight loss

Weight loss is achieved when the amount of energy you burn up is greater than the amount of energy you take in (from food and drink)

**Increasing** your physical activity whilst **reducing** your energy intake from food and drink is the most effective way of losing weight

Regular physical activity is just as important for keeping weight off once you have lost it

Your body shape may also change as you become more active. Taking measurements of your waist, hips, upper arms and chest can help you monitor this.

**Does it matter what type of activity you do?**

Whilst all forms of physical activity are good for you, different types of activity will benefit different areas of your fitness.

**Aerobic activities** will improve cardiovascular (heart and blood circulation) health to help you become fitter and able to day to day activities. This type of activity can also help with weight loss as they encourage your body to burn more energy.

Below are some examples of different aerobic activities -

- Brisk walking
- Swimming (this is not weight bearing)
- Cycling
- Dancing
- Running
- Tennis, badminton, squash
- Stair climbing
- Gardening e.g. digging

**Weight bearing activities** – all activities that you do whilst being on your feet help to improve the strength of your muscles and bones. They can also help change the shape of your body by improving muscle tone.

To get the most benefit aim to be active for at least **10-15 minutes** at a time and at a level which makes you get slightly out of breath and causes your heart rate and body temperature to rise slightly. This level of activity is known as **moderate intensity activity**.
How Much Energy Will I Burn Doing Different Physical Activities?

The table below shows on average how much energy 15 minutes of activity will burn off. If you are trying to lose weight, then try not to reward yourself with food after exercise!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Calories used per 15 minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking slowly</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking briskly</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digging</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill walking (brisk)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karate</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep fit exercises</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight training</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Recommendations for Physical Activity

The amount of physical activity recommended depends on your age and what you want to achieve.

**For all adults**

Be active daily

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Over a week do a total of at least 2½ hours of moderate intensity activity (e.g. 30mins on at least 5 days of the week)

Similar benefits can be achieved by 1¼ hours of vigorous intensity activity a week*

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Avoid sitting / being sedentary for long periods in the day

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Do some activity that improves muscle strength at least twice a week

*vigorous intensity exercise increases your heart rate a lot. You know you are exercising at this level if your breathing is harder and faster and you are unable to talk without needing to pause!

**For older adults**

Also do activities to improve balance & co-ordination on 2 or more days a week

**To help weight loss**

45-60 minutes of moderate intensity activity on 5-7 days of the week
Do You Have Difficulties Increasing Your Physical Activity?

Try to do **light intensity activities** to start with e.g. gentle walk, light housework.

If you spend a lot of time sitting, then try to at least stand up, do some stretches or walk about several times an hour.

Building activity into your daily routine can help it to become part of your lifestyle.

**Pedometers** are small gadgets that can help you count the number of steps you take. They are easy to use and by setting yourself small targets to increase the number of steps you take in a day you can start to make a difference to how active you are.

**Local Activity Schemes in Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland**

Contact your local council, leisure centre or GP for information on what's available in your area. You can also visit [www.lrsport.org](http://www.lrsport.org) to search for activities in your local area.

Typical activities include:
- Walking for Health Groups
- Seated exercise classes
- Taster sessions e.g. dance, zumba, martial arts, pilates, dodgeball, golf
- Subsidised and supported activities for individuals who have a health condition
- Eco-Active Lifestyle (participate in a wide range of conservation projects)