EXERCISE AND ACTIVITY

THE WHO, THE WHY, THE WHY NOW AND THE HOW?

#002

Who should exercise?

Well that's easy - all of us!

Why should we bother with exercise?

This is a bit more complicated.
Being active and exercising help us to continue to be able to do all of the things that we value, for the whole of our lives. This includes traveling without restrictions, living independently, working, helping others, socialising, staying well...

A bit of background

Muscle
We have over 600 muscles in our body. They make up abut 40% of our body weight. Muscle is a big part of who we are - literally. It plays a key role in posture, movment, bone health, maintaining independence, and preventing falls. Our heart is a muscle and our lungs depend on muscles to work. In addition, our muscle tissue cells are very active and they change all the time. This activity helps control our brain and body chemistry - providing energy from food as well as regulating glucose, fats, hormones and proteins. Healthy muscle tissue is vital for the health of almost every other organ in our body, including the brain.

Bone
We have approximately 206 bones in our bodies that are essential for our overall structure. Bones serve many other critical functions, such as protecting our vital organs, providing support for our muscles, and enabling movement. Similar to muscle, bone tissue is highly dynamic and undergoes continual changes. We replace old bone with new by repairing and removing microdamage all the time. Additionally, our bone marrow generates cells that are crucial for maintaining healthy blood, facilitating clotting, and combating infections.

Heart
The heart plays a vital role in the body by pumping blood to all essential organs and tissues. This blood travels through a network of vessels to reach every area that requires it. It delivers oxygen and nutrients necessary for our organs to function and removes the resulting waste products e.g. carbon dioxide.
Our blood vessels can vary in openess, affecting blood pressure and making this blood transport more challenging. A robust and healthy heart, along with well-functioning blood vessels, is crucial for efficiently circulating blood throughout the body.

These three essential body systems are adversely affected by aging, just like all our other systems. Engaging our muscles, bones, and heart through physical activity and exercise encourages all the vital body systems that support them to adapt and improve. They rise to meet the increased demands, responding by becoming stronger, more efficient, and healthier, no matter the age. This enhancement of our muscles, bones, heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, and more significantly reduces the risk of...

coronary heart disease and stroke
type 2 diabetes
bowel cancer
breast cancer in women
early death
osteoarthritis
fractures, including hip
falls (among older adults)
depression
dementia
low energy levels
functional decline
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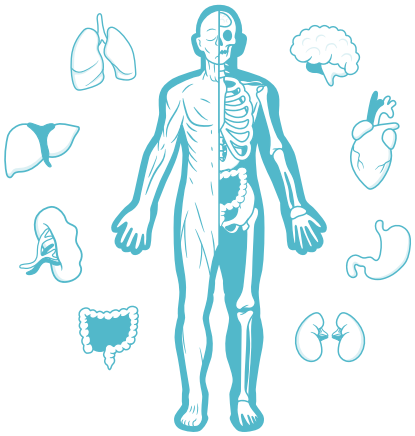

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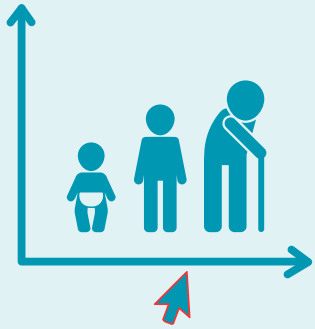
Why Now?



- Muscle strength and mass begin to decline from our mid to late 30s, with noticeable changes by around age 50.
- Bone tissue loss starts by our early 30s.
- We begin to loose cardiovascular efficiency by our mid-30s.

The hormonal changes associated with menopause can accelerate the loss of these vital elements that we need for long-term health and well-being. The encouraging news is that engaging in sufficient physical activity and appropriate exercise can challenge our bodies to perform at their best. We can become stronger, fitter, and maintain our muscle and bone tissue at any age or life stage.

Physical activity and exercise are proven to help preserve and even enhance the health of our muscles, bones, and cardiovascular fitness, regardless of our age.

How?

WHO GUIDELINES ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR, (2020)

Adults from aged 18

All adults should undertake regular physical activity.

Adults should do at least 150–300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity; or at least 75–150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity; or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity throughout the week, for substantial health benefits.

Adults should also do muscle-strengthening (ususally called “Strength” or “Resistance” work) activities at moderate or greater intensity that involve all major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week, as these provide additional health benefits.

Adults may increase moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity to more than 300 minutes; or do more than 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity; or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity throughout the week for additional health benefits.
Older adults should do varied multicomponent physical activity on 3 or more days a week to enhance functional capacity and prevent falls.

Every move counts.

On a scale relative to an individual’s personal capacity,
moderate-intensity physical activity is usually a 5 or 6 on a scale of 0–10
vigorous-intensity physical activity is usually a 7 or 8 on a scale of 0–10.

- Doing ANY physical activity is better than doing none - aim to engage in physical activity according to your abilities.
- If you are new to this type of exercise, some further guidance may help you to be more effective and to reduce injury risk.
- Start by doing small amounts and gradually increase the frequency, intensity and duration over time. Only increase one of these variables at a time. Listen to your body and see how you feel before increasing another.
- If you have any health concerns, talk to a health care professional before starting or progressing your exercise, particularly if your activity exceeds the demands of brisk walking or your everyday living.

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- Find something that you enjoy - it has to be sustainable.
- Build a habit
- Be consistent
- See what your mind and your body think of it!.
- When you are a ready, move to a specific programme that matches your goals.
- Find something you can commit to.

The physical activity and exercise journey involves continually challenging your body to improve. Consistency is key as the advantages of exercise can diminish rapidly. If you lose your routine, return to it as soon as you can.

Here is a sample generic exercise programme for an established exercise routine.

Please note - this is not individualised advice and may not be suitable for everyone.

	AEROBIC	RESISTANCE	CORE/ BALANCE
1 FREQUENCY How often?	5 days a week	2 or 3 days a week.	Whenever you think if it
2 INTENSITY How hard should I be working?	Moderate	Hard	Challenging but safe.
3 TIME How long should I spend?	30 minutes	2 or 3 sets 8-12 reps of each ex. 2-3 mins rest between sets	10 secs to a minute
4 TYPE What kind of exercise?	Whatever you enjoy	Moving against body weight or an external weight.	Standing on one leg Tandem walking add in head turns and mental tasks.
5 PROGRESSION How do I keep improving?	Adapt your exercise as it gets easier	Adapt your exercise as it gets easier	Adapt your exercise as it gets easier
6 PACING What FITTP are right for me.	Listen to your body and adjust activity as needed	Listen to your body and adjust activity as needed	Listen to your body and adjust activity as needed

Aerobic exercise can include swimming/ walking/ running/ cycling/ dancing or whatever you enjoy doing.

Resistance exercise can include body weight squats, push ups, lunges, some yoga/ pilates routines, weights, machines...

Core/ balance exercise can include standing on one leg, tandem walking, pilates, yoga tai chi...

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Some body weight, strength training to get you started...

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These exercise should not feel difficult to start with - they should be quite easy.
You can gradually make them harder by doing them very slowly, by increasing the repetitions or by gradually increasing a weight held.
Aim for 10 repetitions of each exercise and see if you can do that twice in one session.

Stand upright with your legs at shoulder-width apart and your hands on your hips.
Put one hand on a stable surface, if you feel unsteady.

- Take a medium sized pace forward and then enter into a lunge by lowering your body downwards using your legs.
- Allow the forward knee to bend until your thigh is parallel to the floor making sure you keep your back straight.
- Relax your back knee towards the floor, going as far as you feel comfortable.
- Return to the starting position by driving up off the front leg.
- Repeat for the other leg.
- Perform this exercise at a slow controlled pace.

Start in the press up position with the wrists directly under shoulders, the back and trunk in one long line and the toes on the floor. If you find this too difficult, put your knees down on the floor and/ or bring them in under your hips (crawl position).

- Lower the body using the arms and shoulders, as far as you can control. Aim to bring your forehead towards the floor - without poking your chin or tucking it in and keeping your trunk straight.
- Press back up into the start position using your arms and shoulders, keep your hips in line with your back and shoulders, and do not arch or sink your lower back.

Start position is standing straight with your arms out in front and bent slightly at the elbows (or hands resting on waist). Legs are about shoulder width apart (whatever feels right for you).

- Move downwards into a squat position keeping your knees are aligned over your 1st/ 2nd toes and your heels in contact with the floor, make sure the back is straight.
- Keep the head and chest upright and the gaze horizontal.
- Go as far as you can control.
- Hold briefly and return to the start position.

Hold a light weight in each hand and hold them by your side.

- Lift your elbows up towards the ceiling, making sure your elbows stay higher than your hands at all times.
- Your hands will draw up in front of your body.
- Control the movement back to the start position, making sure you do not allow your shoulders to hunch at any point.

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor (make sure you can get up and down from the floor safely)

- Tighten your buttock muscles and lift your hips up into the bridge position - try not to push too hard through your feet.
- Lift your hips so that they line up in a diagonal with knees and shoulders. Don't lift higher than the bottom on your shoulder blades.
- Return to the start position.

Balance on one leg.

- Remember to stand tall, with weight evenly on your foot and toes pointing forwards.
- Place your hand(s) on a wall or a table if you feel unsafe doing this. All you need to feel is a small wobble at your ankle.
- Try to hold for as long as you can safely.
- Repeat on the other side.

For all exercises, keep your breathing relaxed - don't hold your breath.
Discontinue these exercises if they hurt or you feel unwell doing them and get advice from a healthcare professional.