

Information sheet 6

Increasing physical activity

Exercise is an integral part of the weight management process. The human body is actually designed to need regular exercise and lack of exercise is a major catalyst in people gaining weight. When we don't exercise we become badly tuned. "I haven't got the time" is one of the most common reasons for not exercising, along with the misplaced notion that it's all too energetic and "I won't keep up" or "I'm too fat".

Here are the reasons why you should make time to exercise:

- increasing physical activity will make a positive difference to your weight loss
- physical activity burns off calories and increases your Base Metabolic Rate (dieting alone decreases this)
- regular exercise or moderate physical activity can decrease the appetite
- if you begin to combine physical activity with healthy eating, you will probably begin to see the benefits before the scales tell you. It can tone and shape your body to make you feel and look slimmer
- as well as improving weight loss, physical activity involving resistance (using weights; swimming; walking up hill; using your own body weight) can change the ratio of fat to lean tissue - increasing the lean, decreasing the fat

There are also many other benefits of exercising regularly:

- you can work better, feel better and have more energy
- it can help you to sleep better
- it's a good way of reducing stress
- it can help keep your joints and muscles in good working order
- it can strengthen your bones and reduce the risk of osteoporosis
- it can improve circulation
- it can ensure that your blood pressure remains normal, or lower it if it is too high
- it can strengthen your heart and lungs
- it can improve your quality of life

What sort of exercise should I do?

The best form of exercise to promote weight loss is any exercise or activity you enjoy doing - that is any exercise that raises the heart rate and makes you use oxygen. But this exercise does not have to be too energetic.

Examples of these are:

- steady walking - 45 mins burns approx. 300 calories
- steady cycling - 20/30 mins burns approx. 250/400 calories
- swimming (crawl) - 20 mins non-stop burns approx. 250 calories

Other activities that also burn fat, are as follows:

- aerobics classes - 1 hour burns approx. 300 calories
- jogging - 20 mins burns approx. 250/400 calories
- exercise videos - 45 mins burns approx. 300 calories

But remember, fat does not burn very fast. You need to burn approx. 3,500 calories to dislodge 1lb of fat. But do not get disheartened; the fitter you get, the better the body gets at dislodging fat stores. Like eating changes, activity and exercise changes in our lifestyle need to be done slowly but progressively.

How active is your whole family?

Could you all do with more activity?

I aim to become more active this week by doing the following (make these goals S.M.A.R.T. – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time).....