

Level up your daily activity

Factsheet



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Sedentary lifestyles are increasing

Otherwise known as sitting disease, a sedentary lifestyle is when we spend a prolonged amount of time sitting or lying down. For example, travelling, working at a desk, watching TV and playing computer games.

With advances in technology and transportation, and habit changes due to COVID-19 restrictions, many people are unfortunately sitting for most of the day and have little to no exercise. Even leisure time used to involve more activity, but today much of it is sedentary.

A risk to your health

Humans are built to stand upright. The heart and cardiovascular system work more effectively that way. The bowel also functions more efficiently when you're upright.

Research shows increased rates of various chronic diseases, like type 2 diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and even cancer in highly sedentary people.

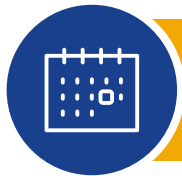
One study found that those who were physically inactive and sat for seven hours or more a day were three times as likely to have symptoms of depression than people who met the physical activity guidelines and sat for less than four hours daily.

! The average person sits for six hours every day.



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NHS physical activity guidelines for adults ages 19-64



Aim to be physically active every day. Any activity is better than none, and more is better still



Do strengthening activities that work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms) on at least two days a week



Do at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity a week or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity a week



Reduce time spent sitting or lying down and break up long periods of not moving with some activity

Why move more?

Whatever your age, there's strong scientific evidence that being physically active can help you lead a healthier and happier life. **People who do regular physical activity have:**

- Up to a 35% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
- Up to a 50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes
- Up to a 50% lower risk of colon cancer
- Up to a 20% lower risk of breast cancer
- A 30% lower risk of early death
- Up to an 83% lower risk of osteoarthritis
- Up to a 68% lower risk of hip fracture
- A 30% lower risk of falls (among older adults)
- Up to a 30% lower risk of depression
- Up to a 30% lower risk of dementia

Getting active can also boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing your risk of stress.

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Squeeze in more activity wherever you are

Regular exercise is the best way to enjoy the health-boosting benefits of physical activity, but it can often be a challenge. Even small amounts of physical activity can provide positive health benefits, so sneak them into your day where you can, regardless of your schedule or surroundings.

In the office

- Make time for standing breaks, for example, in online meetings if the camera is off
- Set a timer and regularly follow some online desk stretches
- Walk to a colleague (while social distancing and wearing a face covering) instead of emailing

In the factory

- Go for a walk in your coffee or lunch break
- Change position regularly when standing on the line
- Rotate tasks
- Standing statically? Pivot and shift your weight from one leg to the other and step from side to side

Either

- Keep a pair of trainers and socks at work for spontaneous moments
- Swap a car or train commute for walking or cycling
- Take the stairs instead of the lift
- Visit a nearby gym in your lunch break or after work
- Stand up every time you're on the phone
- Park far away from your work building
- Get off the bus one stop early

Please help to keep yourselves and your colleagues safe. Remember to wear face coverings and social distance.



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Squeeze in more activity wherever you are

Working from home or with the family

- Go for a 20-minute walk before you start work
- Block out some time in your calendar to get out of the house
- Set a timer for regular breaks
- Walk and talk on the phone
- Use a step tracker
- Invest in some at home exercise equipment
- Regularly get up and stretch, maybe try a short 5–10-minute yoga flow
- Walk and listen to an audio book instead of sitting and reading
- Walk or cycle to the shops instead of driving
- Turn up your favourite tunes and dance
- Play with your kids at the park instead of sitting and watching
- Housework, gardening and DIY all count as active minutes
- Carry the grocery shopping home
- Go for a family walk after dinner instead of watching TV
- Join a class and try something new. Try swimming, badminton or horse riding



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Poor lifestyle choices – the implications

Making negative lifestyle choices can have a major impact on your health and increase the risk of serious health problems.

Poor lifestyle choice	Higher risk of
Having an unhealthy diet	Obesity, cancer and cardiovascular disease
Not getting enough sleep	Heart disease, kidney disease, stroke and high blood pressure
Smoking	Cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke and lung disease
Stress	High blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and diabetes
Alcohol abuse	Cancer, obesity and cardiovascular disease



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The great outdoors

We all know that keeping active rewards us with many health benefits for our bodies and minds. Step it up a gear and take your activity outside to naturally reset and enhance your mind and boost your physical health even more.

A daily dose of vitamin D

Although vitamin D is found in some foods, like salmon and fortified milk, we get more than 90% of our vitamin D from exposure to sunlight. Vitamin D is essential for a well-functioning body. It helps us absorb calcium, prevents osteoporosis and reduces inflammation

Improved mood

Partly due to vitamin D, getting active outside has been shown to reduce anger and depression. You don't have to run a 10k or smash out an outdoor boot camp either. Even low-intensity activities, like walking or gardening for at least 15 minutes, will do.

Better short-term memory

Research has shown that spending time outdoors can improve short-term memory, concentration, and focus by up to 20%.

Strengthened immune system

Exposure to fresh air could help to generate the bacteria you need to fight off harmful pathogens. A pathogen is the first link in the chain of an infection and the only way they can be stopped is to have a host of good bacteria defending your body.

Sleep-inducing

Fresh air and being active can promote better sleep quality boosting overall physical health.



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