



Keep physically active for health and happiness

Remember the last time you took a brisk walk in the park, kicked the footy with mates or took a dive into the cool water of the Pacific Ocean? What about the relaxation that came from tending to your garden? Didn't you feel great?

With such a diverse environment and climate in New South Wales, we have plenty of options for finding an enjoyable physical activity that suits our lifestyle. And the good news is being active helps us keep mentally healthy too.

How does being physically active keep us mentally healthy?

There is evidence to suggest that people who exercise on a regular basis experience higher life satisfaction levels than people who do not exercise at all.¹ Even a small amount of physical activity can reduce anxiety, depression and improve overall general wellbeing.^{1,2}

We don't need to run a marathon to get the mental health benefits of keeping active. Simply setting small, achievable physical activity goals and challenges for ourselves can increase our confidence and self esteem.³ When we achieve these goals we gain a sense of accomplishment which helps keep us mentally healthy.

Being physically active can also take our mind off daily problems and unpleasant thoughts. We relax and unwind which puts us in a more positive frame of mind to deal with any challenges in our everyday lives. Our concentration and memory also improve which helps our performance at work and the quality of our social relationships.³

To achieve the benefits of being active, the National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australian Adults recommends we:

- think of movement as an opportunity not an inconvenience
- be active every day in as many ways as we can
- put together at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week
- if you can, enjoy some regular, vigorous activity for extra health benefits.⁴

Be active with others

Being active is great but being active with others has extra benefits. Physical activity in groups keeps us motivated, allows us to catch up with friends and widens our social networks. This creates a sense of togetherness that makes communities safer and more enjoyable places in which to live, work and play.⁵



How can I fit more physical activity into my day?

We can all find ways to fit a little more physical activity into our lives and enjoy the physical and mental health benefits. Try to think of easy ways that you can incorporate physical activity into your daily routine.

Here are some ideas...

- Leave your car at home and walk or cycle to the shops
- Get outside and play a game of hopscotch or kick a ball in the park with your kids
- Turn up the music, sing along and dance while you vacuum
- Hop off the bus or train one stop early and walk the rest of the way
- Swap your office chair for a fit ball to tone your core muscles
- Plan active outings for the family such as swimming or bush walking
- Invite your work mates for a stroll outside on your lunch break
- Join a sporting club
- Wherever you can, challenge yourself to take the stairs instead of a lift or escalator
- If you work in an office, walk over to speak to your colleagues instead of emailing them

Physical activity makes us feel happier, energised and more confident.

So go on, stay active and keep mentally healthy! It's as easy as A-B-C: **act-belong-commit**.

actbelongcommit.org.au

Organisation	Can assist with...	Contact details	Website
Heart Foundation	Join a walking group! Heart Foundation Walking is a fun, social and easy way to be active and best of all it's FREE! It is Australia's largest network of community-based walking groups with over 17,000 active members.	P: 1300 36 27 87	heartfoundation.org.au
Clubs NSW	Use the Club Finder on the Clubs NSW website to find clubs in your area	P: (02) 9268 3000	clubsnsw.com.au
Department of Sport and Recreation	Find a local sport and recreation club using the Department of Sport and Recreation online directory! Search by location or activity to find something that suits you in just a few clicks.	P: 13 13 02	dsr.nsw.gov.au
Mentally Health Rural & Remote NSW	To get involved in act-belong-commit or find out more about the campaign in NSW, send us an email.		actbelongcommit@crrmh.com.au

1. Stubbe, J. H., M. H. M. de Moor, et al. (2007). "The association between exercise participation and well-being: A co-twin study." *Preventive medicine* 44(2): 148-152.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Participation in sports and physical recreation 2005-06. [Internet] 2005 [cited 2009 May 6]; (ABS cat. no. 4177.0). Available from: <http://www.abs.gov.au>
3. Department of Sport and Recreation (WA). Benefits of physical activity [Internet]. Perth: Government of Western Australia; 2008 [updated 2008 Sept 18; cited 2009 May 6]. Available from: <http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au>
4. Department of Health and Ageing (AU). Physical activity guidelines. [Internet]. Canberra: Australian Government; 2009 [updated 2009 March 23; cited 2009 May 23]. Available from: <http://www.health.gov.au>
5. Better Health Channel (AU). Physical activity - choosing the one for you. The State of Victoria (Australia); 2008 [updated 2008 March; cited 2009 May 28]; Available from: <http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au>

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