

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH

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**WayAhead
Mental Health Information Service
Level 5, 80 William St
Woolloomooloo NSW 2011**

**1300 794 991
info@wayahead.org.au
www.wayahead.org.au**

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Think active. Be active.

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**“If you are
in a bad mood
go for a walk.**

**If you are
still in a bad
mood go for
another walk”**

Hippocrates

Think active. Be active.

Physical activity is fundamental to a healthy lifestyle. It provides positive effects upon physical, emotional and social wellbeing.

The national activity guidelines recommend Australian adults participate in 150-300 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity (or a combination of both) each week. By following these exercise recommendations you will produce health benefits and can increase your quality of life.

Did you know?

- According to the 2003 report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), physical inactivity is responsible for approximately 7% of the total burden of disease in Australia. This makes physical inactivity the fourth leading cause of disease after elevated BMI, high blood pressure and tobacco smoking.
- More than half of all Australian adults do not participate in adequate amounts of physical activity.
- Only 30% of Australians report that they participate in physical activity more than once a week!
- Physical activity has a positive impact on mental wellbeing. This is particularly important as globally depression is the leading cause of disability, and a significant contributor to the global burden of disease.
- Although many adults meet the recommended daily amount of physical activity, some still sit for many hours. Prolonged sitting time can lead to poor health outcomes that are independent of those related to physical activity.

Why should I do physical activity?

There are a number of health benefits associated with physical activity. Benefits include reducing your risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, musculoskeletal problems and high blood pressure.

Being physically active is also a powerful tool for your mental health and cognitive function. It has the capacity to reduce stress associated with everyday life and enhance your social network.

What are the physical activity recommendations?

Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines¹ make the following recommendations:

Adults (18-64 years)

Physical activity guidelines:

- If you are currently not doing any physical activity, start by doing some and gradually build up to the recommended amount.
- Be active on most, preferably all, days of the week, and try to make this part of your daily routine.
- Accumulate 150-300 minutes (2 ½ to 5 hours) of moderate intensity physical activity or 75 to 150 minutes (1 ¼ to 2 ½ hours) of vigorous intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous activity, each week.
- Do muscle strengthening activities on at least 2 days each week.
- Try yoga or gentle stretching to release tension, increase muscle strength and improve overall wellbeing.

Sedentary guidelines:

- Minimise the amount of time spent in prolonged sitting.
- Break up long periods of sitting as often as possible.

Children (5-12 years) & young people (13-17 years)

Physical activity guidelines:

- For health benefits, children and young people should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day.
- Children's physical activity should include a variety of aerobic activities, including some vigorous intensity activity.
- On at least three days per week, children and young people should engage in activities that strengthen muscle and bone.
- To achieve additional health benefits, children and young people should engage in more activity than adults.

Sedentary guidelines:

- Children and young people should be encouraged to engage as little as possible with sedentary activities.
- Screen time, such as watching television and playing video and computer games, should be limited to no more than 2 hours per day.

How Can I Start Doing Physical Activity?

- If previously inactive or unsure of your health status, seek medical advice before starting any physical program.
- If you are a smoker, consider quitting.
- Always set realistic, short term goals so that you can track your progress.
- Engage in an activity that you enjoy.
- Always warm-up and cool-down, with the inclusion of stretching.
- Do it together; get your family, friends, partner, or even your pet involved.
- Schedule a regular time.

How can I implement these strategies into my daily life?

- Play actively with your children rather than playing with technology.
- Choose an active form of transport such as walking, cycling or public transport instead of driving a car.
- When on the bus or train, get off one stop early and walk the rest of the way to your destination.
- Choose the stairs rather than the lift.
- Get involved in housework and gardening on a regular basis.
- Join a walking group or structured fitness class once a week.

Where do I go for help?

The WayAhead Directory

is an online resource providing a comprehensive list of mental health related services in NSW.

www.WayAhead.org.au

Phone Lines

WayAhead Mental Health
Information Line

1300 794 991

Contact your doctor or local GP

Useful Websites

Heart Foundation

www.heartfoundation.org.au/

Office of Sport and Recreation,
NSW Government

sportandrecreation.nsw.gov.au/

The Department of Health

www.health.gov.au/

World Health Organisation

www.who.int/



Translating & Interpreting Service
(TIS) 131 450

Please call the Mental Health
Information Line through the
Telephone Interpreter Service
(TIS). Free to Australian citizens or
permanent residents.

Disclaimer

This information is for educational purposes. As neither brochures nor websites can diagnose people it is always important to obtain professional advice and/or help when needed.

This information may be reproduced with an acknowledgement to the Mental Health Association NSW.

The Association encourages feedback and welcomes comments about the information provided.

Last reviewed by Jamie Saltoon 2018

**“ I found people who
understood exactly what I
was going through ”**



