

Physical Activity

Physical activity is an important aspect of daily life for all people, regardless of ability level: it improves physical and mental health, encourages participation and promotes general wellbeing.

Major benefits of physical activity include:

- Improved muscle, heart and lung function and increased energy levels
- Improved muscle strength and length, and improved balance
- Assisting weight loss
- Reduced risk of chronic diseases including diabetes and heart-related diseases
- Improved ability to fight infections
- Improved mood and decreases stress
- Improved memory, planning and ability to do multiple tasks

Physical Activity Recommendations

It is important that intensity during physical activity is moderate. When taking part, you should feel a little short of breath but still able to comfortably hold a conversation. Adequate rest between sessions is essential.

For maximum benefit, physical activity is recommended three to four times a week, for sessions of 30 minutes or so. Sessions can be broken into shorter pieces if needed – for example, two 15-minute sessions with a break in between.

Before commencing a program of physical activity of any sort, it is important to be assessed by a GP or allied health professional to reduce the risk of injury or ill health. For anyone with any pre-existing conditions or pain, this is particularly important.



Incorporating Physical Activity into Daily Life

There are many ways to incorporate physical activity into daily life. Speaking with your health professional team can assist you in identifying the physical activities that best suit your needs and ability level.

Individualised exercise and fitness programs are an excellent addition to recreational physical activity. They can be especially useful for people who cannot access other recreational activities for any reason. Physiotherapists can assess and tailor an individualised program to meet specific needs and interests.

Physical Activity cont.

Attending a community gym is popular and regularly recommended to improve strength and fitness. An individualised, tailored program - with exercises suited to an individual's diagnosis and type of physical disability - is very important to prevent injury or other long-term problems. Physiotherapists can work with a personal trainer to tailor and review a suitable gym-based program.



Physical activity for complex physical disabilities

Physical activity is just as important for those with complex physical disabilities. An individualised program at home or in the local community can be a great way to keep active. Physiotherapists can provide formal exercise ideas, as well as advising on how best to incorporate physical activity and exercise in everyday life (known as 'incidental exercise').

A physiotherapist can also offer training and provide recommendations to family and support workers on how best to assist an individual in keeping physically active, as well as providing formal 'booster programs' with a therapy team. Many people with physical disabilities need these regular booster programs each year to assist them in maintaining the benefits achieved in therapy programs long term. This need is related to the very specific types of exercise required for people with physical disabilities, which is not easily replicated without the input of a health professional.

Visit futurethinking.abilitycentre.com.au for more information.

