



# Movement for wellbeing

We've all heard it before: 'Exercise is good for us'. We're familiar with the physical benefits, like a stronger heart and reduced risk of chronic disease. But this is only one side of the story. Exercise is a powerful way to boost mood, mental resilience and brain health for life.

Humans feel better when we move our bodies. Physical activity releases built-up muscle tension and floods the body with hormones that boost our mood. When we work out, our bodies release natural chemicals known as 'endocannabinoids'. These chemicals travel up to the brain, where they help us to feel calm, relaxed and positive.

When we work out our body, we also work out our brain. This improves our sleep, and keeps the brain healthy across the lifespan, and can even protect against dementia.

## Which exercise?

What is the best form of physical activity? *The type you can stick to.*

For the best chance of long-term adoption, choose something you *enjoy*, for instance a walk on the beach, social tennis, or gardening.

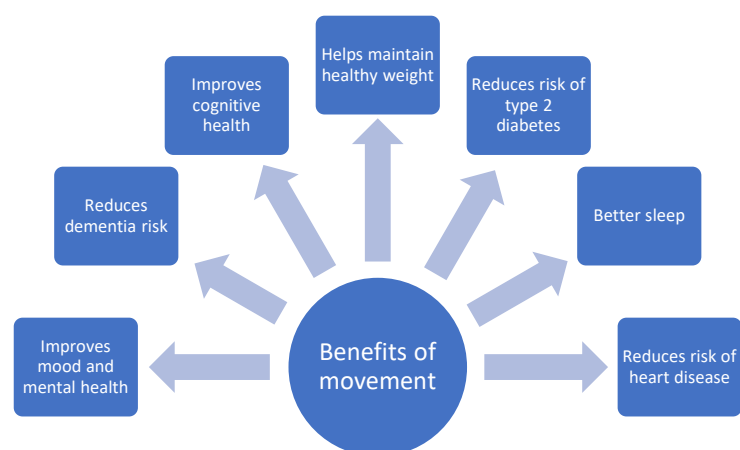
Other research-backed factors for long-term success that are feeling competent at the activity, and diversity/novelty.

There is no right or wrong way to start moving. Focus on the activities that best fit your unique interests, schedule, fitness level, and lifestyle.

## Start small for big success

If you have a medical condition or it's been a while since you exercised, start by consulting your GP.

When engaging in new physical activity, aim for a graded approach to building your ability, fitness and strength.



## 1. Introduce one thing

Start with one activity or achievable goal, and do it regularly to create a routine and habit.

A key to long-term changes is to build habits, which are cultivated through enjoyment, challenge, and achievement. This activates reward pathways in the brain, which supports habit formation.

An effective method is to pair a new exercise habit to something you already do. For example, parking a little further away from your workplace and walking the rest of the way. Research demonstrates that healthy habit formation in the brain is easier if we 'piggyback' a new habit to something that's already part of our everyday routine.

## 2. Don't work at 100% effort

Giving maximum effort, especially in the beginning, can result in disruptions to your progress, such as muscle soreness, fatigue, injury, and a drop in motivation or enjoyment.

## 3. Gradually increase your commitment

When you've succeeded at introducing your new activity habit, increase your effort, distance, time, or variety of activities to work your way up to your goal. Again, keep it realistic and enjoyable.

## How much is needed?

Most of us need at least 20 minutes of 'huff and puff' exercise per session to get benefits for the mind as well as our bodies. You don't need maximum exertion – just enough that you can talk but not sing.

For overall health, the [World Health Organisation](#) generally recommends for adults:

- At least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity per week
- Muscle-strengthening activities on at least two days per week if you're under 65

Remember, you can work your way up to this. Starting small leads to big success.



### Key takeaways

- Exercise isn't just good for physical health – it's powerful for your mental wellbeing and brain health
- Being active now helps us build upon our resilience to deal with life's ups and downs
- It takes about 20 minutes of moderately challenging exercise to get the mood-boosting benefits
- Choose movement you enjoy, start slowly and link it to existing habits if you can

Boosting your wellbeing now, can help you cope when the unexpected happens. Our events and resources can support you to increase wellbeing using practical, evidence-based strategies.

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