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How to increase your physical activity levels

Wokingham Today · 2 May 2024 · 36 · Healthy Heart Tip, written by the Health Promotion and Education Team at Heart Research UK heartresearch.org.uk

PHYSICAL activity plays a massive role in the prevention of heart diseases, but around 40% of the UK still do not meet the physical activity guidelines.

Being physically active does not mean that you need to go to the gym or go running, it can simply be carrying your shopping bags or doing some gardening.

Your heart is the hardest working muscle in your body, and working it out regularly has significant health benefits, especially for your heart.

Did you know that being physically inactive means that you are at a 24% higher risk of developing coronary heart disease?

Here are some tips to help you add more physical activity to your life.

Increase activity in daily life

You may find it best to start by making some small changes to your daily life that will increase your physical activity levels and help you to form healthy habits.

A few examples of what you can do include taking the stairs instead of the lift or escalators, walking instead of driving somewhere or parking your car further away than you need to, and standing when possible, such as on the bus or train.

Get involved

Physical activity comes in all different shapes and sizes, it can range from walking to gardening or even running a marathon. This means there is always something out there for you, it is finding out what you enjoy and getting involved.

It's important that you get involved safely, at the right ability for you and not to jump the gun.

This way you'll avoid injuries and get your body used to new movements. Find activities that you enjoy doing and be creative with them.

Realistically, if you don't enjoy it, you're not going to do it.

You don't have to do all of your exercise in one day, spread it out over the week and make it a part of your everyday life. Gradually work your way up to 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity per day, this will help you to meet the recommendations of at least 150 minutes per week.

Take breaks when you need them and stay hydrated.

If you don't feel good one day, then rest for a day or two before getting involved again.

Get into a routine

By making physical activity part of your routine, you won't realise that you're doing it and it'll become an automatic behaviour. Every bit of activity you do matters, and the more that you do, the more you and your heart benefit. Tracking your progress could help to motivate you to reach your goals and stick to your routine.

This could be the number of steps you've done, the number of minutes you've been active or reaching your daily target.

Support each other

You might find it more encouraging to join a sports club or team. This way you can make new friends and support each other to meet your goals.

Do activities with your family and friends. You could go for a walk or bike ride together and motivate each other to do this regularly.