

Why you need to be active:

Everybody, young and old, needs to be active to keep healthy – our bodies are designed to be active and without physical activity they don't perform to their best capacity.

If you and your family aren't very active at the moment, increasing your physical activity levels could have an immediate and positive impact on your lives. You'll find that you:

- feel good about yourself;
- have more energy;
- sleep better;
- cope with stress and anxiety better.

It's never too late in life to be active and feel better. As well as making you feel and look better in the short term, regular physical activity can help fight overweight and obesity.

So what's the problem with being inactive?

Approximately three out of five men and women here are overweight or obese, which poses a serious risk to their health. Even more worryingly, more than a third of children are overweight or obese, putting their health at risk.

Regular physical activity is essential if you want to lose weight and keep it off in the long term – healthy eating alone is often not enough.

By taking more physical activity you will also reduce your and your family's risk of a wide range of health conditions, both now and in the future. These include:

Coronary heart disease or stroke

Inactive people are nearly twice as likely to develop heart disease as active people. It is estimated that a quarter of all strokes could be avoided if people were more active.

Diabetes

Physical activity helps to prevent or delay the development of Type 2 diabetes, and can help you to manage the condition if you have already developed it.

High blood pressure (hypertension)

Regular physical activity may help to prevent blood pressure rising as we get older. It can also lower blood pressure in around three quarters of people who already have hypertension.

Osteoporosis

Regular activity in childhood and early adulthood will help ensure higher bone mineral density throughout life, while regular activity in middle and older age slows the rate of age-related bone loss.

Some types of cancer

Physical activity has been proven to reduce your risk of developing colon cancer. Some studies have suggested that it can also reduce your risk of other types of cancer, including breast, prostate and lung cancer.

Depression and anxiety

Inactive people are more likely to experience depressive symptoms. Physical activity helps reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, and raise self-esteem.