



World  
Cancer  
Research  
Fund

# LIVING AN ACTIVE LIFE

The title 'LIVING AN ACTIVE LIFE' is written in large, bold, blue capital letters. The word 'LIVING' is on the top line, 'AN' is on the second line, 'ACTIVE' is on the third line, and 'LIFE' is on the fourth line. The letters are surrounded by light blue icons: a person playing basketball above the 'I' in 'LIVING', a person pushing a shopping cart to the right of the 'N', a person walking to the left of the 'A' in 'ACTIVE', a person sitting on the ground to the right of the 'E', a person jumping above the 'L' in 'LIFE', and a person on a bicycle to the right of the 'E'.

Dear supporter,

Thank you for choosing World Cancer Research Fund's booklet,  
Living an Active Life.

Modern-day living increasingly involves us moving less and sitting more. As well as contributing to weight gain – which is one of the biggest lifestyle risk factors for cancer – research has also shown that a lack of physical activity can directly increase our cancer risk.

Despite the wide range of health benefits, many of us don't meet the recommended minimum of 150 minutes of moderately-intense physical activity a week. Keeping physically active can reduce the risk of many physical and mental health issues – it can also help to make us feel good!

This booklet is for those who want to get more active in their daily lives. It explains the benefits of being physically active and provides a number of practical tips and advice to help you move more to reduce your risk of cancer and other diseases.

We hope you find this booklet interesting and informative. Please share with your family and friends to help them also reap the benefits of an active life!

Best wishes,

*Kate Allen*

**Dr Kate Allen**

Executive Director, Science & Public Affairs  
World Cancer Research Fund



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“  
It’s important  
to keep  
physically  
active – both  
for our mental  
and physical  
health.  
”

## Getting more active

It has been said that “if exercise could be packed into a pill, it would be the single most widely prescribed and beneficial medicine in the nation.” And they’re right! Being active every day is an important way to help reduce your cancer risk, improve your long-term health and help make you feel good – physically and mentally.

Getting more active doesn’t mean having to join a gym or spending hours exercising. In fact, the benefits of activity can be seen in less time than you may think. Changing a few daily habits can soon make you more active. It needn’t be a big change, just making a few small changes could have a big impact on your health. Throughout this booklet we give you lots of practical tips to help you be more active in your daily life.

## Physical activity and cancer

One of our Cancer Prevention Recommendations is to be physically active as part of everyday life – walk more and sit less.

**Our research has shown that physical activity protects against cancers of the colon, breast and endometrium (womb) and that it helps protect against weight gain.**

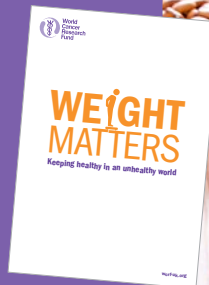
If you want to read more about our other Recommendations, such as how to make healthy changes to your diet, visit our website: [wcrf-uk.org](http://wcrf-uk.org)

Physical activity helps to reduce the risk of cancer by:

- ▶ **Helping move food through the digestive system more quickly.** This reduces the amount of time that any cancer-causing substances are in contact with the lining of the bowel.
- ▶ **Helping keep hormone levels healthy.** This is important as having the wrong levels of some hormones can increase cancer risk.
- ▶ **Helping maintain a healthy weight.** Greater body fatness is a cause of many cancers, and because being active helps maintain a healthy weight through using calories, physical activity may indirectly reduce the risk of obesity-related cancers. Being overweight or obese is linked to at least 12 types of cancer. **See how many calories you could burn by being active:** [wcrf-uk.org/exercise-calculator](http://wcrf-uk.org/exercise-calculator)

For more advice on losing weight and to help stop the pounds from creeping on, check out our weight guide: **Weight Matters: keeping healthy in an unhealthy world.** You can download it for free at:

[wcrf-uk.org/weight-matters-keeping-healthy-unhealthy](http://wcrf-uk.org/weight-matters-keeping-healthy-unhealthy)



# What is physical activity?

Physical activity is anything that involves bodily movement that requires you to use energy (calories). This includes activities undertaken while working, playing, carrying out household chores and using active transport such as walking or cycling to get to and from work.

Exercise is a subcategory of physical activity and is something that is planned and structured, with the aim of improving one or more components of fitness. Beyond exercise, any physical activity that is done during leisure time, for transport to get to and from places, or as part of your work has a health benefit.

## How much should I do?

In the UK, the weekly physical activity guidelines for adults are:

At least **150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity** such as brisk walking, cycling, swimming and dancing



Or **75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity** such as running, aerobics, fast swimming and fast cycling



Or **shorter durations of very vigorous-intensity activity** such as sprinting or stair climbing



Or a **combination of moderate, vigorous and very vigorous-intensity activity**



In general, **75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity can give similar health benefits to 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity.**

Exactly what counts as moderate-intensity activity varies for each of us depending on how fit you are to start off with. Most moderate-intensity activities can become vigorous-intensity activities if you increase your effort.

If being active for at least 150 minutes every week sounds like a lot, it's important to remember that making any increase in your daily activity levels can make a difference to your health. And remember, it doesn't have to be done all at once. The total can be made up of several shorter periods of activity throughout the week.

If you aren't active already, start by introducing some gentle activity and build up slowly. There is no minimum amount of physical activity required to achieve some health benefits – **aiming for 10 minutes at a time can be a great start to get more active.** Even small bite-sized chunks of physical activity for five minutes spread throughout the day is a really positive start.

While any activity is better than none, more is better still. When you can achieve the physical activity guidelines, if able, aim to gradually increase how much you do each week.

**You should also aim to do muscle-strengthening activities at least twice a week.** See page 25 for more information and exercises you can try at home.

## How do I know how hard I am working?

**The talk test is a simple and helpful guide to measure how hard you are working.** If you can talk but not sing, then it is likely you are doing moderate-intensity activity. If you're doing vigorous-intensity activity, you will not be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.

**If you aren't regularly physically active, it's a good idea to start with no more than moderate-intensity activity.**



# The health benefits of keeping active

We know that getting more active can reduce your risk of cancer, but it can also have an immediate impact on your health and help protect it for the future too. Physical activity helps to improve your quality of life and provides a wide range of benefits to your health – both mentally and physically.

## Physical activity helps to:

- ✓ Improve your long-term health
- ✓ Reduce your risk of developing certain cancers, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and heart disease
- ✓ Maintain or improve physical function (your physical ability to do things in your life)
- ✓ Improve fitness, strength, flexibility and mobility
- ✓ Maintain and increase muscle (with muscle-strengthening activities)
- ✓ Strengthen your bones (with impact or weight-bearing exercises)
- ✓ Manage your weight
- ✓ Support your immune system
- ✓ Manage stress and anxiety
- ✓ Improve your mood and wellbeing
- ✓ Improve sleep
- ✓ Give you more energy
- ✓ Protect against and manage depression

## Sitting less

As well as getting regular physical activity, we should try to **reduce the amount of time spent sitting down during the day**. This means avoiding long and uninterrupted periods of watching television, using the computer or tablet.



**Our research has shown that too much screen time increases the risk of weight gain.** People watching screens can be exposed to the marketing of highly processed food and drink which are high in fat, sugar and/or salt and **often consume high-calorie snacks and drinks while watching.**





**Our research has also shown that being sedentary is linked to weight gain.**

**Being sedentary uses up very little energy** and involves sitting or lying down whilst awake, for example; sitting whilst using a screen, or reading.

Although some people such as wheelchair users may have little or no other option, **there is increasing evidence that sitting down too much or for too long can be a risk to your health.**

Sitting for long periods can also cause joint and muscle tightness, which can lead to lower back pain and knee stiffness. Even if you do regular strenuous activity, it is still important to minimise how long you spend sitting.

**The good news is that the adverse health effects of sitting for long periods of time can be reduced by doing light activity every 30–60 minutes** such as doing some light stretching, standing up and moving around – or how about doing some sit-to-stands from your chair or sofa?

**Keep reading for tips to help you move more throughout the day.**

## Getting motivated

**While many of us want or have tried to get more active, for some, it is difficult to get motivated. Research has shown that we may be less motivated to be active if the main reason to keep active is to lose weight or change our body shape, rather than just exercising because we enjoy it.**

Think about some of the reasons why you want to move more. Maybe you want to reduce your risk of certain cancers, or just to feel healthier and fitter.

Think about what you like doing – walking, dancing, swimming, yoga – you will get more enjoyment and greater benefit doing more of the activities that you enjoy.

It can also be useful to have a goal in mind. However, rather than saying “I want to be more active”, be specific, such as saying “I am going to go for a 10-minute walk after work”, or “I am going to do an online fitness class every Tuesday morning”. You may even find that **writing your goals down and having somewhere you can see them can help to keep you motivated.** Set goals that are going to motivate you as well.

# Our top tips to help get you motivated

## Find what works for you

If you are someone who likes tracking your progress, measuring your daily step count can be a good option.

Watching how many steps you take each day and challenging yourself to reach a daily goal is a great way to keep motivated – and it helps you keep track of your daily activity. Many mobile phones now have built-in step counters.



## Make it easy to exercise



Get your sportswear out of the drawer and ready the evening before.

## Remember the positives



Think about how being active will help to make you feel fitter, more energised, relaxed, self-confident, happier and healthier.

## Do what you enjoy

If you find yourself wanting to dance instead of lifting weights or jogging, it's better to do that rather than trying to force yourself to do something just because you think you should.



## Plan your exercise for when it's easiest to do

For many, this may mean exercising early in the day before temptations and obstacles begin to appear.



## Work out together

If you've arranged to meet a friend for a walk or booked an exercise class, you're more likely to keep that commitment. Not wanting to let your friend or exercise partner down can be a great motivator to show up.



Or how about taking part in one of our fundraising events?

You can find out more at: [wcrf-uk.org/fundraising-events](http://wcrf-uk.org/fundraising-events)





“  
Big journeys  
start with  
small steps.  
”

## Getting started

**Step 1: Look at what you are already doing.** By filling in the physical activity diary on the next page, you can use it to help you work out where you can do more – even if it’s just a bit more of what you already do, for example, walking for longer, or slightly faster. You can also use it to plan when you are going to be active for the week.

**Step 2: Build up to 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week.** If you don’t do regular moderate-intensity physical activity at the moment, aim to build-up to this amount. For example, if you enjoy walking, start by doing a 5–10 minute walk every day for a week or two; then make it 15 minutes and gradually increase the time and how fast you walk over the following weeks.

**Step 3: Mix it up.** Once your fitness starts to improve, why not try doing different activities, such as yoga, Pilates, swimming, dancing, golf or even some gardening or housework? Doing a variety of activities keeps it interesting, and finding things you enjoy makes it easier to stick to.



If you have a health condition that may prevent you from being physically active, check with your doctor or health professional first; otherwise, your age and current level of fitness shouldn't stop you from being active.



|           | ACTIVITY                            | DURATION   |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| MONDAY    | Eg. 12.30pm - walk around the block | 15 minutes |
| TUESDAY   |                                     |            |
| WEDNESDAY |                                     |            |
| THURSDAY  |                                     |            |
| FRIDAY    |                                     |            |
| SATURDAY  |                                     |            |
| SUNDAY    |                                     |            |

To record more weeks, email us at [resources@wcrf.org](mailto:resources@wcrf.org) for a blank copy.

# Keeping active DURING cancer treatment

While some people might find it a bit more difficult to keep active, it can help you feel better.

Keeping active while undergoing cancer treatment can help to alleviate some of the effects of cancer such as helping manage fatigue, and helping you to cope better with the side effects of treatments such as chemotherapy.

Staying active can help you to maintain or enhance your physical fitness, relieve mental distress and improve your overall quality of life.

You should aim to continue physical activity as far as possible during treatment. **Try to build up to the recommended 150 minutes**

**of moderately-intense physical activity a week.**

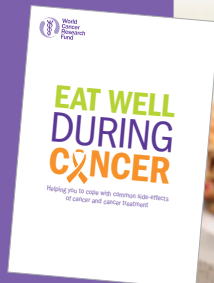
During cancer treatment, you may have experienced a loss of muscle mass. To help counter this, aim to do some muscle-strengthening activities at least twice a week.

**Build-up how much you do, and on days when you are feeling more fatigued try not to overexert yourself – listen to your body.** There may be days where you need to give yourself a bit of push to get going, but you'll probably feel better for it.

Activities such as a gentle walk outside can be really beneficial in helping improve feelings of wellbeing.

For those who are going through cancer, you may be interested in our guide, **Eat Well During Cancer**. You can download it for free at:

[wcrf-uk.org/ewdc](http://wcrf-uk.org/ewdc)



# Keeping active AFTER cancer treatment

Some people may become less active than they used to be during cancer treatment, but once you have recovered and you are given the 'go-ahead', you can start to build up your physical activity levels.

You should aim to be as physically active as your physical ability allows, and where possible try to limit time spent being inactive.

If you haven't been regularly physically active, start slow – and remember, something is always better than nothing.

Becoming more active can be difficult if you are recovering from cancer treatment or haven't been physically active for some time. Depending upon the type of cancer you have recovered from, you may find it hard to do what you were doing before.

But getting a bit more activity and movement into your daily life can make a real difference to how you feel – mentally and physically.

After treatment, exercise can contribute to increased fitness, reduction in fatigue, and improving your wellbeing.

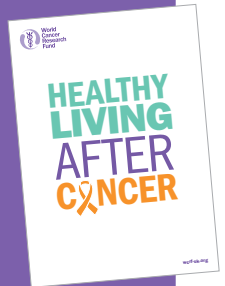
In addition, although not conclusive, there is research to suggest that in some types of cancer – such as breast, colon and prostate cancer – exercise might improve rates of survival.

Aim to build up to the recommended 150 minutes of moderately-intense physical activity a week.

Try to include some muscle-strengthening activities at least twice a week as well – this can help you rebuild any muscle you may have lost during cancer treatment.

For those who have finished their cancer treatment, you may be interested in our guide, **Healthy Living After Cancer**. You can download it for free at:

[wcrf-uk.org/hlac](http://wcrf-uk.org/hlac)



If you are currently going through cancer treatment or have recovered from cancer and are planning to start exercising, it's a good idea to speak to your doctor first.

# Keeping active with a disability

If you are a living with a disability, being active can bring you important health benefits and can help you manage daily life too.

Regular physical activity that raises your heart rate, as well as muscle-strengthening activities, are just as important for your health and wellbeing as they are for other adults. **Whatever your preferences and level of physical ability, there will be an activity or sport for you.**

Some of the physical and mental health benefits include:

- ▶ **Helping to improve your mental health and quality of life**
- ▶ **Helping to make daily tasks easier and increase independence**
- ▶ **Strengthening muscles and bones**
- ▶ **Improving fitness**
- ▶ **Improving mobility and balance**
- ▶ **Helping to prevent chronic diseases**
- ▶ **Making you feel good**

## How much should I do?

For general health, all adults are advised to do at least 150 minutes of moderately-intense physical activity a week, plus balance and muscle-strengthening activities at least twice a week. Of course, your impairment or health condition may affect what you can do. **But whatever your impairment or health condition, being more active can only make you feel fitter and healthier.**

## What kind of activity?

The kind of activities that are right for you depend on the type and level of your physical ability and the types of activity that appeal to you.

Your aim might be to improve certain aspects of physical function to help with daily life or you may be seeking to improve your health and fitness.



To be on the safe side, talk to your doctor or physiotherapist before starting to check what activities will be suitable for you.

At the end of this booklet, we share details of other organisations that can provide additional support to help you get more active.





“  
It's never too late  
to start being  
more active.  
”

## Keeping active as you get older

As you get older there is a natural inclination to be less active, with more time spent watching television, reading, or lying down. You may also experience more ‘aches and pains’ and other health conditions that might make exercise more challenging. As such, it is even more important to keep physically active – both for our mental and physical health.

Some of the benefits it provides include helping you to:

- ▶ Stay healthy and independent
- ▶ Reduce your risk of falls
- ▶ Protect your mental health
- ▶ Protect your memory
- ▶ Reduce your chance of joint and back pain



## Keeping strong

When you get older, one of the major changes is losing muscle mass and strength. You can start to lose muscle from as early as 30, which increases at a rate of around 1–2% a year from the age of 50. While this is a normal part of getting older, it is made worse when you are not active and using your muscles.

**Lower levels of muscle are linked with greater frailty, weakness and being less able to carry out normal daily activities.** This means people can have trouble with regular tasks such as getting out of bed, standing up from chairs, climbing the stairs or carrying groceries.

All of this can make living independently a lot more challenging. Difficulty moving can also mean people end up moving even less which speeds up muscle loss.

The good news is that by incorporating some muscle-strengthening activities into your routine at least twice a week, you can help to off-set some of these changes and help to keep yourself healthy. But, any strengthening activity is better than none.

## How much should I do?

If you've been inactive for a while, gradually build up your activity levels to reach the recommended amount of at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity a week or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity if you are already active. Remember, any activity is better than none.

It's moving from a sedentary lifestyle to a somewhat active one that makes the biggest difference to your health. The more you do the better, even if it's just light activity. **Remember, it's never too late to adopt and reap the health benefits from a more active lifestyle.**

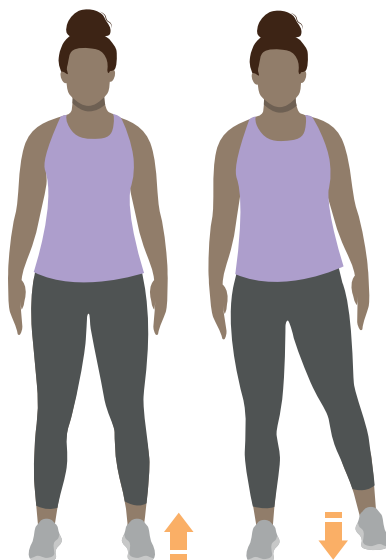
**To reduce the risk of falls, aim to do activities that help with balance twice a week, such as dancing. Or you could try the exercise on the next page.**



## Shifting weight

### Benefits: helps to improve balance

- 1 Stand with your feet hip-width apart and your weight evenly distributed on both feet.
- 2 Relax your hands at your sides. You can also do this exercise with a sturdy chair in front of you in case you need to use it for balance.
- 3 Shift your weight on to your right side, then lift your left foot a few inches off of the floor.
- 4 Hold for 10 seconds, eventually working up to 30 seconds.
- 5 Return to the starting position and repeat with the opposite leg.



## Keeping active during the day

As well as trying to move more, if you are sitting or lying for long periods, try to move every 30–60 minutes if possible. Breaking up periods of sitting with light activity is really positive for your health.

### You can break up periods of sitting by:

- ▶ Standing up and moving during TV advert breaks
- ▶ Standing or walking while on the phone
- ▶ Taking up active hobbies such as gardening and DIY
- ▶ Using the stairs as much as possible
- ▶ Going for a walk, either outside or around the garden (if you have one)
- ▶ Doing most types of housework such as cleaning and dusting



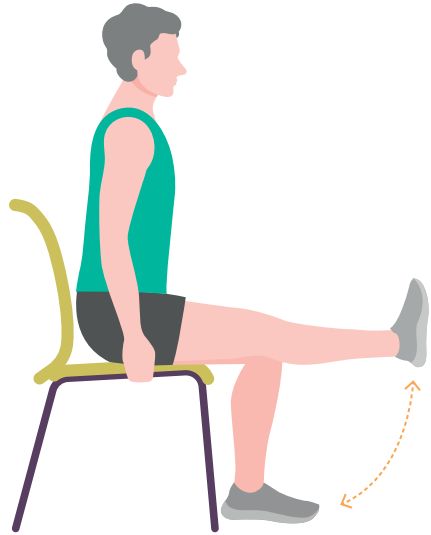
How about trying some of these simple exercises you can do at home?

## Knee extensions

**Benefits: strengthens the thigh (quadricep) muscles**

- 1 Sit in a chair, shoulders back and core upright.
- 2 Straighten right leg – focus on using your thigh muscles.
- 3 Keep the back of your thigh on the chair.
- 4 Pause for 2-3 seconds.
- 5 Lower leg back to starting position.
- 6 Repeat for 10-20 repetitions, then repeat with the opposite leg

**TIP:** this can be made harder by attaching weights around the ankles.

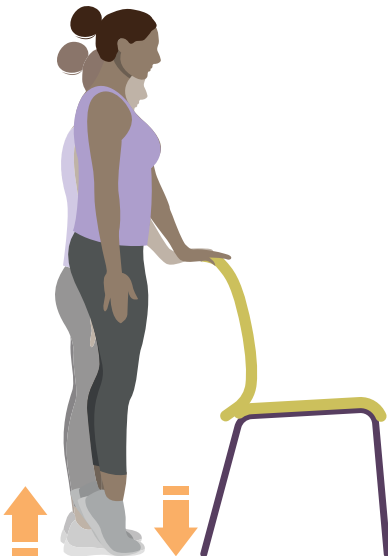


## Calf raises

**Benefits: strengthens the calf (lower leg) muscles**

- 1 Hold on to the back of a sturdy chair.
- 2 Stand up on your tiptoes and hold for 2-3 seconds before lowering your heels back down.
- 3 Repeat for 10-20 repetitions.

**TIP:** try to use the chair for balance rather than holding on too tightly.

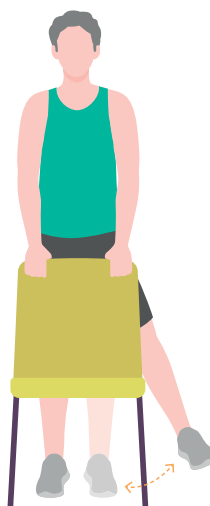


## Side leg raises

**Benefits: strengthens the thigh, hip, and bottom (glute) muscles**

- 1 Stand behind a sturdy chair and hold on for better balance.
- 2 Lift one leg out to the side, keeping it aligned from heel to hip, while maintaining a straight back and a slight bend in the supporting leg, then slowly lower the leg.
- 3 Do not bend the lifted leg or point the toes, and keep the standing leg slightly bent.
- 4 Repeat 10–20 repetitions for each leg.

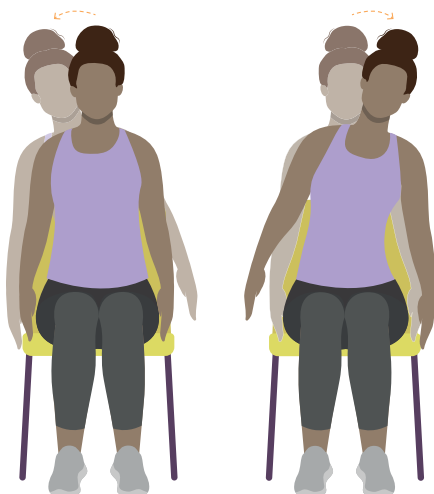
**TIP:** Try not to hold your breath – breathe in as you lower to the side and exhale as you come back up.



## Side bends

**Benefits: strengthens your oblique (the sides of your stomach) muscles, and helps improve core stabilisation and spinal support**

- 1 Sit up straight in a sturdy chair, with your feet flat on the floor.
- 2 Place hands by sides (you can also hold cans or small bottles of water in your hands).
- 3 Keeping your lower body still and your core tight, slowly lean over to the side, trying not to lean forward – hold this position for 2 seconds and then return back to the centre keeping your upper body straight.
- 4 Repeat 10–20 repetitions for your left side, then repeat for your right side.





# The components of fitness

For all-round fitness, you should try to incorporate these types of exercise

## Aerobic exercise

Also known as **cardiovascular** or **cardio** for short. This type of exercise **raises your heart rate** and **increases your breathing rate**. It helps to **increase your fitness, endurance** and **stamina**. Aerobic physical activity also helps to **protect against weight gain**.

## Muscle-strengthening activities

These types of exercises **work our muscles against weight or resistance** and help **keep our muscles and bones healthy**.

## Flexibility and balance

These are important for **all-round fitness**. Keeping flexible helps to **improve posture, releases muscle tension** and **reduces the risk of injury**. Balance exercises are also important, especially as you get older, to help **reduce the risk of falls**.



## Aerobic exercise

Your heart is a muscle – and as such needs to be exercised to keep it healthy. This type of activity helps to strengthen your heart and lungs and makes them work more efficiently, which over time, increases your fitness. Any activity that raises your heart rate to a safe level for a period of time is an aerobic activity.

Aim to warm up and cool down at an easy pace before and after any exercise that gets your heart pumping.

### Warming up:

This is something you do to prepare yourself for physical exertion. It's a gentle exercise which primes the body by gradually increasing your heart rate. Spending 5 minutes warming up reduces the risk of pulling or straining a muscle. For example, if you were going cycling, a warm-up could include 5 minutes of very easy effort cycling.

### Cooling down:

Also known as warming down. This is a very easy exercise done after a more intense activity to allow the body to gradually transition to a near-resting state. For example, walking for 5 minutes after jogging.

How about trying some of the exercises below? Start off easy to begin with.

## Easy level: Marching

- 1 Begin with a 5 minute warm-up such as marching on the spot.
- 2 After 5 minutes, start lifting your knees a little higher and continue for a further five minutes.
- 3 Finish with some bodyweight squats for 10–20 repetitions (see page 29 for how to perform a squat).
- 4 Lastly, spend 5 minutes slowly marching on the spot without lifting your knees too high until your breathing rate has reduced.

**When you can complete your routine with ease, then try to make it harder by working a bit harder and doing it for longer – this way you'll continue to further strengthen your heart and lungs. You can also build up to trying the medium level exercise.**

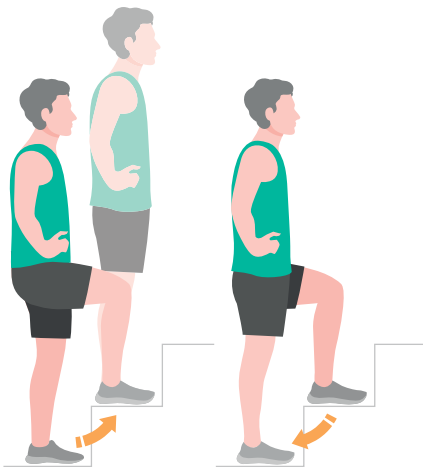


## Medium level: Step-ups

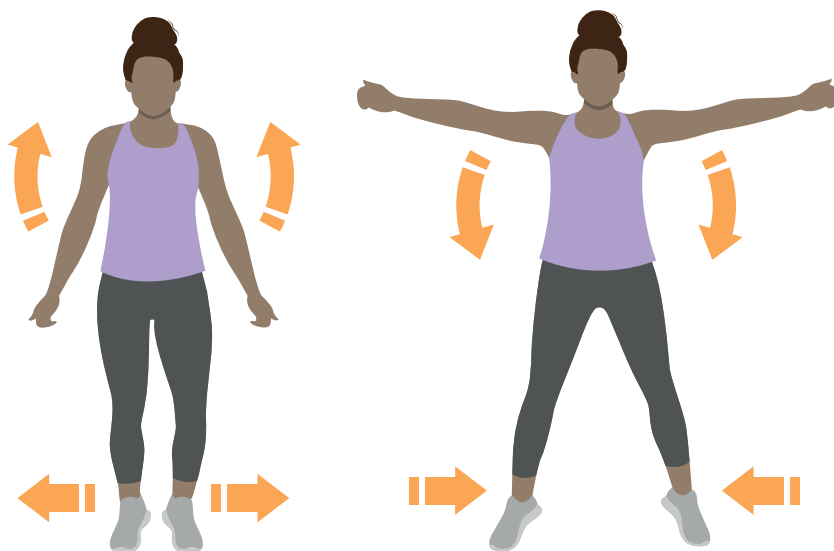
**Use a sturdy step or the bottom step of the stairs**

- 1 Step up on to the step, leading with your right leg.
- 2 Keeping the right foot on the step, bring your left foot up to meet it.
- 3 Step back down, leading again with the right leg and bringing your other foot down to join it.
- 4 Keep going for 1 minute and then switch to lead with your left leg.
- 5 Go as fast as you are comfortable with.
- 6 Try to do for 1 minute leading with the right leg, then 1 minute leading with the left leg.

**Too hard? Gradually build up the time – start doing 20–30 seconds before building up to 1 minute. When you are able to, try to build up to the advanced level exercise on the next page.**



## Hard level: Jumping jacks



- 1 Stand with your feet together and arms at your sides.
- 2 Bend your knees and jump, moving your feet apart.
- 3 Raise your arms out to the sides until your hands are level with your shoulders.
- 4 Jump again, keeping your knees bent, to bring your feet back together and your arms back to your sides.
- 5 Take care to put your heels down on the floor each time you jump.
- 6 Aim to repeat 10–20 times, then increase when you are able to.

**Too hard? Step out to the left with your left leg and raise both arms to shoulder height at the same time. Then step back to the centre and repeat using your right leg.**

For those who are fitter, you can even do all of these three exercises together, one after another. If you want a further challenge, try doing two circuits.





## Muscle-strengthening activities

This is an area that is often overlooked. However, it is becoming increasingly apparent the vital role this type of exercise has on our body. From the age of 30 you start to lose a small amount of muscle each year, which then affects our strength.

The good news is that you can help slow down this loss and even increase our muscle and strength by doing muscle-strengthening activities at least twice a week. But, any strengthening activity is better than none.

Doing these types of exercises at least twice a week is just as important for our health as regular aerobic exercise. That's why strengthening exercises are important for everyone.

Some of the benefits include:

- ▶ Maintaining and increasing muscle mass and strength
- ▶ Helping maintain bone density (to reduce the risk of osteoporosis)
- ▶ Improving blood sugar control
- ▶ Helping make daily activities feel easier

## What activities strengthen our muscles?

Doing muscle-strengthening activities doesn't automatically mean having to go to a gym or lifting weights. They can easily be done at home without the need for weights.

For example, you can use your body weight in exercises like squats, working with resistance bands or using items such as water bottles for added resistance. Heavy gardening like digging and carrying heavy shopping also counts.

**Yoga is another form of activity that counts as one of your recommended muscle-strengthening activities – and it can increase your physical**

**and mental wellbeing.** Not only does your body benefit from movement, but your mind benefits from the stillness. Tai chi and Pilates are other forms of exercise that count as well.

**Aim to perform a range of exercises that work all of your major muscle groups, such as your leg, chest, back, shoulder, arm and abdominal (stomach) muscles.**

Incorporating these exercises into your daily routine doesn't need to take up much time – even spending 5–10 minutes doing a few exercises a couple of times a week is a positive start.

### As a guide:

- ▶ Perform **2–3 sets** (how many times you complete a particular number of repetitions) of the exercise of your choice for **10–20 repetitions** (the number of times you perform the movement). The last repetition should make you work a bit harder.
- ▶ Lift and lower the weight in a controlled manner (**2 seconds up** and **3 seconds down**).
- ▶ You can make your exercise harder by doing each repetition **slower and/or increasing the number of repetitions** you do.
- ▶ Aim to do muscle-strengthening activities at least **twice a week**.



## Your sample home workout

The following exercises not only help to strengthen and tone your muscles, but they will also give your heart and lungs a workout. Remember to start slowly and don't overexert yourself, especially if you haven't done any of the exercises before.

**Become familiar with the proper technique for each exercise first** to make sure your muscles benefit

and you stay injury-free. **If any of the exercises cause you any discomfort then please stop.**

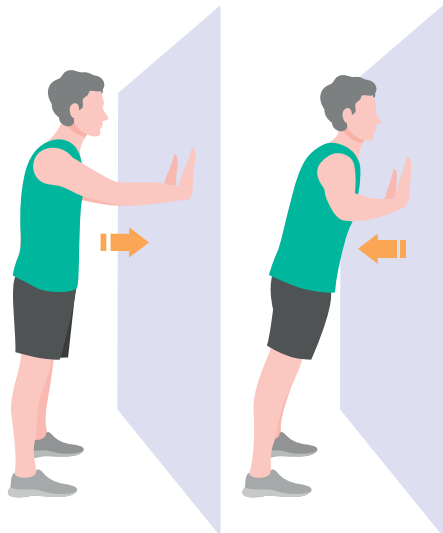
**Rest for about 30–60 seconds after each of the below exercises** (rest longer if you need to). As you get fitter and stronger you can decrease how long you rest for. On each exercise, **breathe in as you lower the weight and breathe out as you lift the weight.**

**Warming up:** Before starting the below exercises, spend a few minutes getting the body ready by doing movements such as shoulder rolls, arm circles, side bends, calf raises and a few easy bodyweight squats.

### Wall push-ups

**Benefits: strengthens the chest, shoulder and tricep (back of the upper arm) muscles**

- 1 Stand about 3 feet away from a wall (you may want to start closer to begin with), facing the wall, with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- 2 Lean forward and place your hands flat on the wall in line with your shoulders. Your body should be in a plank position, with your spine straight.
- 3 Slowly lower your body toward the wall as far as is comfortable and then push back.
- 4 Repeat for 10–20 repetitions.



## One-arm rows

**Benefits:** strengthens the back, bicep (front of the upper arm) and forearm muscles

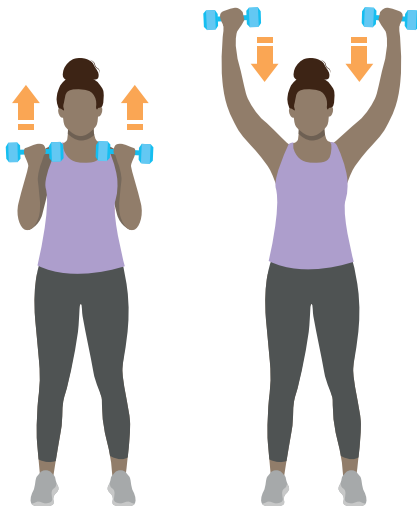
- 1 Place one arm on a chair, keep your back flat and head looking ahead.
- 2 Hold a weight (a tin can or bottle of water) in your free hand, letting it hang straight towards the floor.
- 3 Keeping your chest and head up, lift the weight towards your hip. Your upper body should be parallel to the floor, and your elbow pointed towards the ceiling.
- 4 Slowly lower the weight under control back to the starting position.
- 5 Repeat for both arms.
- 6 Repeat for 10–20 repetitions.



## Shoulder presses

**Benefits:** strengthens the shoulder and tricep muscles

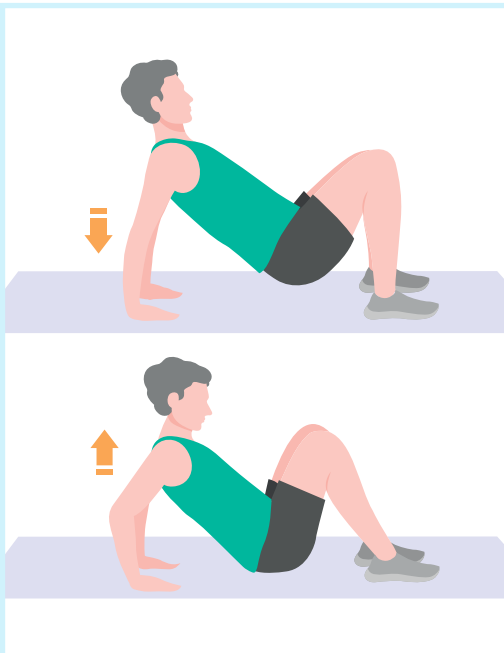
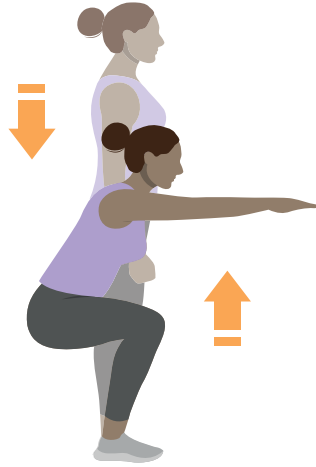
- 1 Hold a weight in each hand, stand with your feet about hip-width apart (you can be seated if more comfortable) and keep your core tight.
- 2 Bend your elbows and raise your upper arms to shoulder height so the weights are at shoulder level.
- 3 Push the weights overhead, keep a slight bend in your elbows, your core tight and your back straight.
- 4 Slowly lower the weight back to shoulder level, keeping your core tight and back straight.
- 5 Repeat for 10–20 repetitions.



## Squats

**Benefits: strengthens the thigh (quadricep) and bottom (glute) muscles**

- 1 Stand with your feet about hip-width apart.
- 2 Angle the toes out slightly.
- 3 Keeping your core tight, bend the knees to slowly lower into your squat – go down as far as is comfortable – you can also stand behind a sturdy chair and hold on for better balance.
- 4 Be mindful to keep your back neutral and avoid your upper torso leaning forward. Keep your knees over the line of your toes.
- 5 Push through your heels to stand up.
- 6 Repeat for 10–20 repetitions.



## Tricep dips

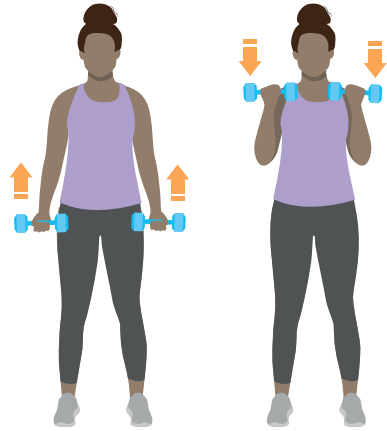
**Benefits: strengthens the tricep muscles**

- 1 Sit on the ground with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
- 2 Place your palms flat on the floor behind your bottom, your fingers pointing towards your body.
- 3 Breathing in, slowly lower your body towards the floor by bending your elbows behind you (not out to the sides). Lower a few inches to begin with and build up.
- 4 Keep your back straight as you lower, then push up, breathing out, back to the start position.
- 5 Repeat for 10–20 repetitions.

## Bicep curls

**Benefits:** strengthens the bicep muscles

- 1 Hold a weight in each hand, stand in an upright position (you can be seated if more comfortable), keep your core tight and shoulders back.
- 2 Hold the weights at the side of your legs, arms fully extended and palms facing forward.
- 3 Bend your elbows and curl the weights up to your shoulders, making sure you curl all the way to the top, keeping your arms tucked into your sides.
- 4 Slowly lower the weights back down making sure to straighten your arms until they are next to your legs where you started.
- 5 Repeat for 10–20 repetitions.

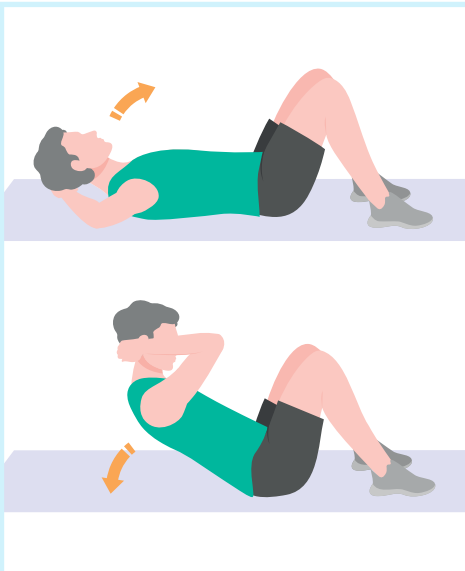


## Abdominal curl-ups

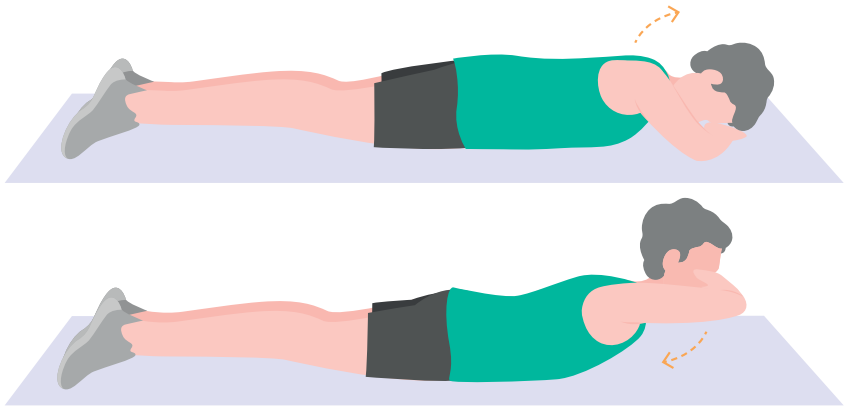
**Benefits:** strengthens the abdominal (stomach) muscles

- 1 Lie on your back, knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
- 2 Place your hands lightly behind your head (to support the weight of your head), but don't pull on your neck.
- 3 Slowly curl up towards your knees until your shoulders are about three inches off the floor. Breathe out when curling up. Breathe in as you slowly return to the starting position.
- 4 Try to keep a gap between your chin and chest on each repetition.
- 5 Repeat for 10–20 repetitions (or as many as is comfortable).
- 6 Don't get up too quickly when you have been lying down.

**Note:** if you have had abdominal surgery within the last six weeks you should build up to this exercise.



## Back extensions



### Benefits: strengthens the lower back muscles

- 1 Begin by lying face down on your bed or a soft area of the floor and bring your hands up to your temples with your elbows out to the sides.
- 2 Begin to slowly lift your shoulders and chest off the floor a few inches.
- 3 Slowly return to the starting position and repeat 10-20 repetitions (or as many as you can comfortably do).
- 4 Don't get up too quickly when you have been lying down.

**Note:** if you have had spinal surgery or had osteoporosis of the spine you should avoid this exercise.

Once you can get through a circuit (one lot of each exercise) comfortably, aim to build up to doing two circuits. For those who are more experienced, you can add heavier resistance. You can also make the exercises harder by increasing the number of repetitions you do or by performing each exercise slower.

**Cooling down:** When you have finished, spend about five minutes doing some stretches. Go into each stretch slowly and hold for around 30 seconds. See the next section for some stretches you can try.



## Flexibility and balance

Regularly doing flexibility exercises can help to keep you supple, and adds movement into your day. Stretching can also be a great way to help get you moving in the morning or a way to relax after a long day. It can also help to improve your posture. Activities such as yoga combine stretching and also improve balance. Dancing is another activity that helps. By improving your balance, you could help prevent yourself from having a fall.

Although flexibility and balance exercises are gentle and do not usually count towards your 150 minutes of moderately-intense physical activity, they are still important. **Aim to do at least twice a week.**

### When should I stretch?

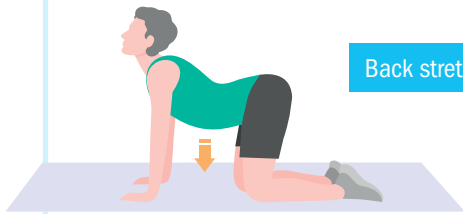
You can stretch before exercising as part of your warm-up, but the best time to stretch is after you exercise as your muscles are nice and warm. Stretching after exercise can help reduce muscle stiffness the following day.

Maybe you could fit in some gentle stretching in-between advert breaks if you are watching television or when you get out of bed in the morning?

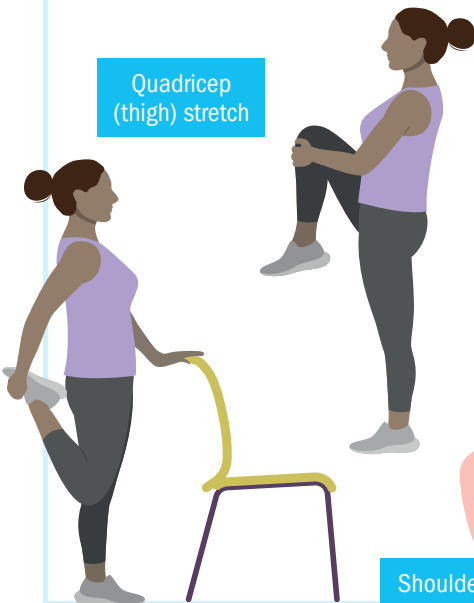
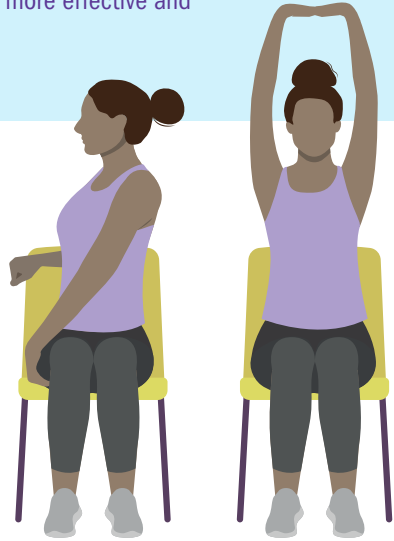
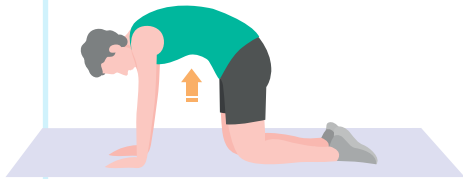


## Some tips for when stretching:

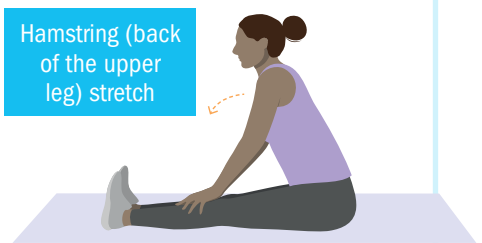
- ▶ Take a deep breath and slowly exhale as you gently stretch the muscle to a point of tension. Don't hold your breath during the stretch. Breathe normally.
- ▶ Don't strain or push a muscle too far. If a stretch hurts, ease up.
- ▶ Don't bounce a stretch. Holding a stretch is more effective and there is less risk of injury.
- ▶ Hold a stretch for around 15–30 seconds.



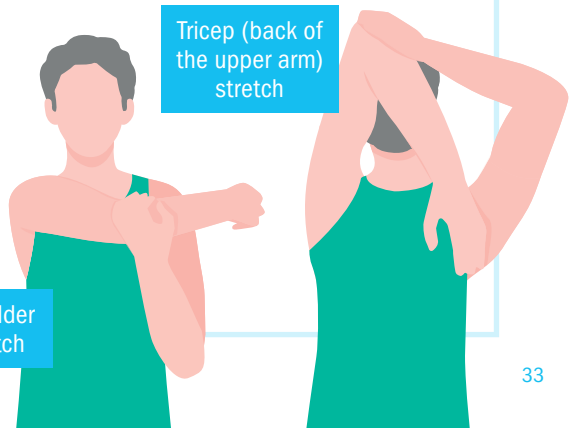
Back stretches



Quadricep (thigh) stretch



Hamstring (back of the upper leg) stretch



Shoulder stretch

Tricep (back of the upper arm) stretch



## Being active in your daily life

While it may be harder for some to keep physically active, one of the easiest ways to be more active is to build it into your everyday life. **It's about making a few small changes**, for example, using the stairs instead of the lift or escalator, making journeys by foot instead of by car or bus – it's these changes that add up over time.



### Fitting in activity

Do what suits you and what fits into your lifestyle.

If you're a morning person, try getting up earlier to fit some activity in before your day starts. If not, you could try and do some physical activity before you settle down for the night.

**Find a certain time each day to be active, even if it's just for a few minutes.** A stretch before bedtime or walking more briskly to work both count – small amounts of activity throughout the day all add up.



### Start small

Taking steps to get more

physically active can be daunting for some, but it's about starting slowly and gradually increasing how much you do.

Fit in five or 10 minutes here and there. Or go for 20–30 minutes in one go.

**Do what you can, and remember that whatever you're able to do, it will benefit your health and wellbeing.**



## Get walking

Walking is one of the most popular forms of physical activity – it suits most abilities and almost anyone can do it. Regular walking can also help protect against weight gain.

There are lots of ways you can increase the amount of walking you do. For example, **walking to the shops** (if you don't live too far away from your local shops) – and carrying your heavy shopping bags home counts as a muscle-strengthening activity too!

**Try getting off the bus a stop earlier, parking further away,** or leaving the car behind for short journeys. Try to **walk**

**up the stairs** instead of using the lift or escalator whenever you can – it also helps to strengthen your leg muscles.

Explore your local surroundings – **walking is a great way to discover new places.** Maybe set up a local walking group or take part in one that has already been organised in your area. Being outside also has proven benefits to our wellbeing.

**Top tip:** if you are walking for exercise, you need to be walking fast enough that you are getting slightly short of breath (moderate-intensity) – but not so fast that you can't speak in full sentences (vigorous-intensity).



## Getting active together

If you'd like to start a new exercise or activity **try joining forces with others** – how about getting your friends, family or neighbours involved? You can help each other and be active together, it's also a great way to stay motivated and can help give you that extra push.

Some people find being active with someone else can make it more enjoyable and there is the benefit of social interaction as well.

How about signing up to an exercise or dance class? **Knowing you need to be somewhere at an agreed time can be all you need to stick with a fitness routine.**



## Do what you enjoy

We're all more likely to do something and stick to it, if we enjoy it. If it's dancing along to your favourite song on the radio, doing an online fitness class, walking the dog (or maybe the neighbour's dog!), swimming, gardening, or yoga – the key is to **find something that you enjoy** – that way you will be more motivated to keep doing it.

**Be creative and vary your activities.** Change the place or time where you do your activity or try something totally new to keep things exciting. **Find ways of being active that are fun and make you smile.**

more tips >>



## Give yourself a reminder

If you are at home or work, **use your mobile phone or computer to set a reminder to move more.** For example, maybe it's to go for a walk after lunch or simply a reminder to get up and move every 30–60 minutes.

The act of writing it down or receiving an alert can help you stick to it. Put your trainers and exercise clothes in clear sight, as this can be a gentle reminder to yourself to stick to that planned brisk walk. **Try to set aside time in your diary to be active so it becomes part of your daily routine.**

It's these little changes and reminders that help to keep us moving more. **The most important thing is not to give up.** If you miss a day – just start again tomorrow.



## Getting active at home

There are lots of things you can do to keep active at home. If you have stairs, **you could walk up and down the stairs or use the bottom stair to step up and down.**

If you are speaking to your friend or family on the phone, stand up and move around, or why not try marching on the spot?

When moving around your home, try marching, lifting your knees up as high as they will go; or swing your arms for more effort. If you want more of a challenge, try jogging on the spot for a few minutes.

Don't let housework feel like a chore, put on some upbeat music and you have a free exercise class and a clean home!

If you have a garden, **gardening also counts towards your physical activity target**, provided it makes you feel warm and raises your heart rate.

Digging, raking, weeding, watering and planting all uses different muscle groups and is great for your whole body.

**Digging and shovelling also count as one of your recommended muscle-strengthening activities.** Gardening is

also a great activity to get you outside, which has been shown to be good for our mood and wellbeing.

**It's also important to break up every hour you are sitting down with some light movement.**

For example, if you are watching television, stand up at each advert break and do a few stretches, or how about multi-tasking and doing a few chores? If you have a stationary bike, you could always pedal your bike while watching TV as well.

**If you can't walk or stand, try seated knee lifts, kicks, punches or arm circles.**



## Getting active at work

While working, if you find yourself sitting at your desk for hours at a time, there's plenty you can do to be more active in your working day.

If you are on the phone, **try walking and talking**, or maybe you could have a standing meeting? Have a stroll through the office or **get up to speak to your work colleague** rather than emailing.

Whether you work in an office or at home, **use your lunch break to get**

**active**. Maybe you have a gym nearby where you can go for a swim or attend a class, or you could put on your trainers and go for a brisk walk – this is also great for helping you de-stress!

If you're stuck at your work desk, stretch your legs out in front of you, raise your arms and stretch your arms in front of you, and try some shoulder rolls. Why not try using an adjustable standing desk when using a computer?

**Standing gives an added benefit of using more calories.**

## Keeping safe:

- ▶ Start with light to medium effort and gradually build up the pace of your activity. Make sure you slow down gradually too.
- ▶ Don't overexert yourself, and most importantly listen to your body.
- ▶ If you feel any twinges or become overly out of breath stop what you are doing. If you experience chest pain, dizziness or feel faint at any time while you're exercising, stop immediately and see a doctor. During exercise, you should feel no more than a burning sensation in your muscles, not a sharp pain. If something hurts, stop doing it.
- ▶ Don't do physical activity if you feel unwell or have a high temperature.
- ▶ Remember to drink water before, during and after your activity – especially if it is hot or you sweat a lot.



**If you have been inactive for a while or have any health conditions, it is a good idea to speak to your doctor first.**



## Other advice you might find helpful

World Cancer Research Fund's main focus is to help people reduce their risk of developing cancer by following our Cancer Prevention Recommendations. We also provide advice to people who are living with and beyond a cancer diagnosis, to help them live long, healthy lives and to reduce their risk of developing cancer again.

Visit our website [wcrf-uk.org](http://wcrf-uk.org) or call us on **020 7343 4205** for more information.

For more resources to help you make healthy changes to your lifestyle, visit [wcrf-uk.org/publications](http://wcrf-uk.org/publications)

### Advice from other organisations

- ▶ NHS Choices has further information for adults, older people, children and people with disabilities to get more physical activity, visit [nhs.uk/live-well/exercise](http://nhs.uk/live-well/exercise)
- ▶ For local exercise classes for those aged over 60 and for less able people of all ages, visit [extend.org.uk](http://extend.org.uk)
- ▶ For resources for less able people to get active, visit Inclusive Fitness at [efds.co.uk](http://efds.co.uk)
- ▶ For local walking schemes, visit [walkingforhealth.org.uk/walkfinder](http://walkingforhealth.org.uk/walkfinder)



#### Disclaimer

The information in this guide should be safe for most adults to follow. We are not responsible for any injuries that could result from people following any of the exercises contained within the booklet. If you are unsure as to whether they are suitable for you, it is best to first check with your doctor or a qualified exercise professional.

# Cancer Prevention Recommendations



## **Be a healthy weight**

Keep your weight within the healthy range and avoid weight gain in adult life



## **Be physically active**

Be physically active as part of everyday life – walk more and sit less



## **Eat a diet rich in wholegrains, vegetables, fruit and beans**

Make wholegrains, vegetables, fruit, and pulses (legumes) such as beans and lentils a major part of your usual daily diet



## **Limit consumption of 'fast foods' and other processed foods high in fat, starches or sugars**

Limiting these foods helps control calorie intake and maintain a healthy weight



## **Limit consumption of red and processed meat**

Eat no more than moderate amounts of red meat, such as beef, pork and lamb. Eat little, if any, processed meat



## **Limit consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks**

Drink mostly water and unsweetened drinks



## **Limit alcohol consumption**

For cancer prevention, it's best not to drink alcohol



## **Do not use supplements for cancer prevention**

Aim to meet nutritional needs through diet alone



## **For mothers: breastfeed your baby, if you can**

Breastfeeding is good for both mother and baby



## **After a cancer diagnosis: follow our Recommendations, if you can**

Check with your health professional what is right for you

**Not smoking and avoiding other exposure to tobacco and excess sun are also important in reducing cancer risk.**

**Following these Recommendations is likely to reduce intakes of salt, saturated and trans fats, which together will help prevent other non-communicable diseases.**

## About World Cancer Research Fund

World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) is one of the world's leading cancer prevention charities, and the only UK charity solely dedicated to funding life-changing research into the prevention and survival of cancer through diet and lifestyle. We champion the latest and most authoritative global scientific research on cancer prevention and survival through diet, weight and physical activity, helping people to make fully informed lifestyle choices to reduce their cancer risk.

We know that around four in ten – or 40 per cent – of cancer cases are preventable. That's around 147,000 people every year in the UK. Our vision is that preventable cancers in the UK are halved by 2050. By following our Cancer Prevention Recommendations, choosing not to smoke (or giving up smoking) and being safe in the sun, you will have the best chance of living a life free from the disease. Find out more: [wcrf-uk.org/our-research](https://wcrf-uk.org/our-research)

**Will you help us build a world where fewer people every day get preventable cancers?** Our work is funded solely by charitable donations. Your support will help us continue providing easy to access health information to help people reduce their risk of cancer: [wcrf-uk.org/donate](https://wcrf-uk.org/donate)



### Contact us

We're always looking for ways to improve the information we provide. If you have any comments or suggestions about any aspect of this booklet or our other health information, please contact us at [resources@wcrf.org](mailto:resources@wcrf.org) with your feedback. For any enquiries or to request the information in large print, please contact us.

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