

GET UP, GET MOVING

The latest evidence suggests that the UK is the Champion of Obesity in Europe with nearly a quarter of adults classified as obese (severely overweight). If current rates continue then in just over 40 years, over half of all adults and a quarter of all children in the UK are likely to be clinically obese.

A major contributing factor to the obesity epidemic is physical inactivity with up to three quarters of adults in the UK not taking enough physical activity to benefit their health. Adults who are physically active have a 25% reduced risk of a premature death and up to 50% reduced risk of developing chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke and Type II diabetes. Lack of physical activity is associated with obesity, breathing problems, infertility, psychological problems and even some cancers. Recent research, reported that adults of South Asian origin were 3 times more likely to die from heart disease and 6 times more likely to develop Type II diabetes than the White participants.

Before starting any change in physical activity, arrange a review with your GP to make sure you don't have an underlying medical problem. Here we will look at how best to start a new physical activity program once you have had clearance from an appropriate medical practitioner.

The best way of maintaining a healthier lifestyle and weight is a combination of increasing physical activity and reducing calorie intake. As long as you burn up more than your calorie intake then you will reduce your weight. To keep healthy, adults should do a minimum of 30 minutes per day of at least moderate physical activity on 5 or more days per week, whereas children need to do at least an hour a day.

What is 'moderate physical activity'? It's movement that results in:

An increase in breathing rate.

An increase in heart rate, where the pulse can be easily felt

A feeling of increased warmth, possibly accompanied by sweating on hot or humid days.

You can do all 30 minutes at once or in separate sessions throughout the day, e.g. 3 x 10 minute brisk walks. If however you wish to lose weight then you should exercise a total of 60 to 90 minutes per day. If you haven't done any regular physical activity for a while then it is best to start slow and gradually increase duration. Stop if you are becoming severely short of breath or getting any pains and seek medical advice. Make the physical activity fun by participating in local community outings, group activities or team sports.

If, after reading these guidelines you have any questions concerning physical activity/exercise related health issues please forward to me and I will do my best to answer them in further issues.

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Disclaimer

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