



Royal Flying
Doctor Service
QUEENSLAND SECTION

A GUIDE TO MANAGING Exercise & mental health

FROM THE FLYING DOCTOR



BENEFITS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Regular exercise is not only beneficial for physical health but can also help manage and maintain mental health. Research and studies indicate that people who exercise regularly are more resistant to a range of mental illnesses and exercise can be just as effective for treating mild to moderate depression as therapy and medication. Exercise can improve wellbeing in the following ways:

- > Releases chemicals such as serotonin and endorphins which improve mood.
- > Improves sleep by tiring out the body and mind.
- > Increases social connection when participating in sports and activities with other people.
- > Provides a sense of achievement and can improve self-esteem.
- > Reduces stress by providing a physical and mental release.
- > Pumps blood to brain which improves ability to think more clearly.

It is generally recommended that 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise on most days is a healthy amount.

WHAT TYPES OF EXERCISE HELP?

In short, any! Walking for just 30 minutes, 3 times a week has been found to be beneficial. It is generally recommended that 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise on most days (or at least three times a week) is a healthy amount. Vigorous just means putting in enough effort that it's hard to have a conversation whilst exercising. Both aerobic and anaerobic are effective forms of exercise for boosting mental health.



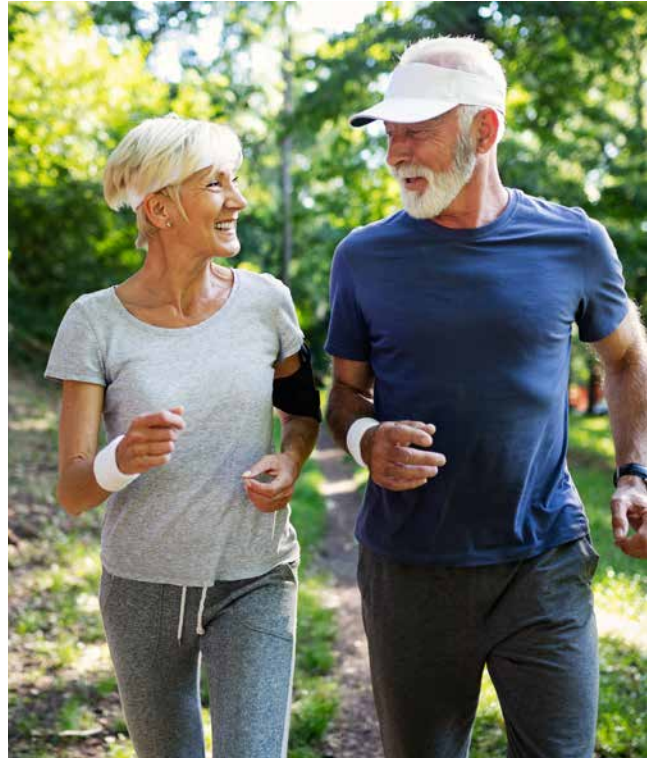
AEROBIC

- ✓ Walking ✓ Jogging ✓ Cycling
- ✓ Swimming ✓ Dancing

ANAEROBIC

- ✓ Weightlifting ✓ Sprinting
- ✓ Climbing





HOW TO BUILD EXERCISE INTO DAILY LIFE

Start small: Going from doing nothing to setting a goal of exercising 5 times a week would feel overwhelming. Starting with an easy exercise goal that you know you can achieve will help build confidence and momentum. Build up to the harder more challenging goals.

Make it automatic: Schedule exercise into your daily life the same way you would meetings or appointments. Set reminders such as an alarm and use triggers to make the behaviour more habitual e.g. same time of day, same place.

Find something that is enjoyable: You are more likely to want to keep doing it. Don't like the gym? Then try a sport or an activity. If a workout is unpleasant or makes you feel incapable, then there is a high risk you won't continue. Pick an activity that fits with your lifestyle, ability and taste.

Tell others your goals and ask them to check your progress. Accountability to others is a good way to stay on track.

Make a commitment to others: Tell others your goals and ask them to check your progress. Accountability to others is a good way to stay on track. Likewise having another person to exercise with who is waiting or relying on you to turn up minimises the risk of opting out.

Monitor progress: Keep track and review the benefits of exercise along with how much closer you are to a final goal. Reminding yourself of what you want to achieve along with noticing the benefits will further fuel motivation.



Sources: Therapist Aid - www.therapistaid.com | Beyond Blue - www.beyondblue.org.au | HelpGuide - www.helpguide.org

