

Getting Active

Welcome to the Active Lives section on **getting active!**

Contents

Getting Active Quiz - Questions.....	1
Getting Active Quiz – Answers.....	1
Concerns	3
1. I’m concerned about pain.....	3
2. I’m often too tired	4
3. I don’t think I will benefit because I can’t do much activity	4
4. I don’t have time or money	5
Choosing ways to be more active.....	5
1. Walking	6
2. Being more active at home.....	6
3. Involving friends and family.....	7
4. Other ideas to be more active	8
Using a step counter.....	8
Setting Goals.....	9

Getting Active Quiz - Questions

1. Being active can improve your memory – True or false?
2. Even short bursts of physical activity can improve your mood – True or false?
3. Being active can make you less tired – True or false?
4. Being active can help you to control your health – True or false?
5. Physical activity has to be highly strenuous to be beneficial – True or false?

Getting Active Quiz – Answers

1. TRUE

Research shows that physical activity can help you learn and keep your memory sharp.

Research shows...

When you are active, your heart rate increases, which increases blood flow to the brain.

Being active also leads to **brain growth** and stronger connections between brain areas, which **improves your memory** and how quickly you understand information.

2. TRUE

Research shows that even a small amount of activity can help to improve your mood.

Being active causes the brain to release hormones which make you feel happier. This happens within a few minutes of being active and can last for hours. It's a great way to help you deal with stress and improve how you feel.

Research shows...

In one study of 1,947 adults aged 50-94, people were asked about how often they took long walks, went swimming, or did sports.

The study found that doing **physical activity protected against becoming depressed.**

3. TRUE

Research shows that regular activity increases your energy levels, which means you feel less tired and more able to do other things.

You might feel more tired at first if your body is not used to being active, but with regular activity, you will build up more energy and feel less tired!

4. TRUE

Research shows that **people who are active feel they have more control** over their health and their lives. This is because they are taking action to improve their health and can see the benefits as they become more fit.

In Getting Active, you control how you do more activity:

- **Try out different activities to see what you enjoy** – the more you enjoy an activity, the easier it is to keep doing it!
- If an activity doesn't work for you, choose another one to try

5. FALSE

Even moderate activity such as gentle walking has great benefits for our health. **Being more active should never be harmful** – even if you have health problems.

If you have not been very active for a while, **activity may make you feel a bit uncomfortable at first**. This is because your muscles take time to get used to being more active. As you move more, you will notice that you feel better and more able to get moving; just **build up slowly**.

Research shows...

Activity is actually good for most health problems.

Being active can improve back and neck pain, and help with heart, lung and breathing problems.

Concerns

It's normal to have some concerns about getting active.

Below are some of the most common concerns people raise.

1. I'm concerned about pain

Research shows that **gentle activity is actually good for most types of pain**, such as arthritis, back pain, neck pain and knee pain, and that activity can reduce pain in the long term.

This picture shows how **doing very little activity can worsen pain** and lead to more concern about being active. Although being active might make you a bit sore at first, this soon goes away as you get fitter.



The best thing to do is to **start with easy, gentle activity** until you feel more able to be active. All the activities in this session are quite gentle so that you don't need to worry about overdoing it.

How do I make sure I don't overdo it?

The key is to **do a little activity every day**, so that you build up your strength. **Start small** and **slowly increase** activity levels. As you build up your strength, you will find that you can do more.

If you are concerned, try activities with someone else there to support you or in a place where you feel safe. You can also start by doing chair-based activities to build up your strength. These activities are safe for most people, and the more you do them, the easier balancing and moving around will get.

If you are still concerned you can ask your GP for advice.

2. I'm often too tired

Research has found that for many people, gentle activities are helpful in shaking off tiredness.

By starting small and moving just a little more each day, you can slowly increase the amount of activity you do.

- **Doing something is better than nothing** – doing a bit of activity is better than doing nothing at all. Usually people feel better after they've done a little bit.
- Try to do a few short activity sessions to keep active when you feel tired. Doing **a few minutes at a time** will give your body a chance to rest.

If you are still concerned you can ask your GP for advice.

3. I don't think I will benefit because I can't do much activity

Sometimes people feel that they are too unfit or too old to do much activity. It seems like a lot of effort without much reward. But the less activity people do, the more unfit they become and this can lead to more tiredness and pain.

If you do a little bit every day, you soon start to feel less tired and have less pain. All the activities suggested in this session are gentle, and can be done as much or as little as you feel able to.

If you are concerned about how much activity you can do, you can start by doing chair-based activities or taking short breaks from sitting.

If you are still concerned you can ask your GP for advice.

Tim's Story

"I'm in my 70s now and I've been less active over the past few years. Sometimes I've had pain in my back or joints. I've been getting stiff and feeling less fit. I always just put it down to my age."



"Not long ago I learned that the less you do the more your muscles waste away. My wife told me that doctors have said your body gets unfit because you don't use it enough, not because you are too old. I guess it's that old saying - "Use it or lose it!"

"Getting older means it's harder to keep muscle, but it seems you can still build it up if you keep active. I decided to make a change. I thought I could walk once a day, just 10 minutes down the road to buy the paper. Over time, this got easier and I could feel my fitness improving, which is great! I walk every day now and I feel like I am not as stiff or sore in my joints. Walking a little bit more is a simple solution, but it works!"

4. I don't have time or money

Just like at home, the best way to get yourself moving is to place things you need further away from where you usually sit.

Many people are put off being active because they think it means paying for a gym membership or buying expensive equipment. But you don't need a lot of time or money to get active.

To improve your health, you can choose to do simple, free activities such as walking and stretching. You can **be active anytime, anywhere and without any equipment.**

Research has shown that just 10 minutes' activity at a time is enough to improve your health. If you struggle to find 10 minutes to get active, try adding in activity to something you already do, like going for a walk while you are on the phone.

Angela's Story

"Since I retired, I've felt like I've got a bit unfit, but I never seemed to get round to doing anything about it. I volunteer doing the books for a local charity most weekdays and need to leave home at 7am to catch the bus. I go round my mum's to make sure she gets dinner and takes her medications in the evening and only get home about 8-9pm. When I am not working, I usually try and help my son with the kids, so my days fly by. I felt I don't have the time or energy to get more active, and there's no way I'd be able to get to the gym or go to a class.

"I realized I could build a bit more activity into my life without it taking up much time. Now, when I get the bus, I walk to a bus stop just a couple of minutes' further away from my house. Once I'd done that for a bit, I started to take the stairs instead of the lift to build up my muscles. I started to feel like I had more energy and I sleep better. In the end, I managed to fit more movement into my day without having to spend lots of time or money on it!"

Choosing ways to be more active

Whatever your ability or current activity level, being more active in your daily life will be good for you. Every bit of activity helps! You don't need to take up new sports or do something new to get more active. The best way to keep up new activities is to find ones that you enjoy, are comfortable doing and fit with your lifestyle.



There are lots of easy ways to add some physical activity in.

1. Walking

Experts say that walking is “the nearest activity to perfect exercise” – it gets our major muscles working and keeps our lungs and heart fit without needing to be hard or tiring. What’s more, you don’t need to have specialist sports equipment and walking can easily fit in with your daily life and the things you like to do.

Ways to increase walking:

- Walk part of your journey to the shops
- Choose a parking space further away from where you need to go
- Use the stairs instead of the lift
- Get off the bus one stop earlier
- Take a walk in the garden or around your neighbourhood at lunchtime
- Walk to the local library to read the newspaper

Mary's Story

"Every other day I get the bus to the supermarket. I feel lucky to have a bus stop right outside my door but since I don't get out as much as I used to, I worried that I was starting to get unfit.

I started walking to a bus stop further away from my home. This only took 5 minutes. After a while I also got off the bus one stop earlier and walked the rest of the way to the shop. This added about 10 minutes to my daily walking and made me feel good. I felt I was more fit and could walk further without getting tired. My goal is to do the same on the way home from the shop. I'm still working on it, but I hope I can do more and more."

2. Being more active at home

All activity is a good for you and there are plenty of ways in which you can become more active around the house. If you're already doing some of these things, that's great! You might like to think about how you could them more often, or maybe try out some of the others too?

- Plant something or do some weeding in the garden
- Do some light housework around the house such as dusting
- Do bits of DIY for yourself or for others
- Go up and down the stairs a couple of times
- Stand at the kitchen unit or breakfast bar when doing craft activities or using a laptop



- Keep teabags in a different room from the kettle so that you walk a bit further when making tea.

Robert's Story

"I know it's important to be active, but I don't like to go out to do activities. I was never into team sports and I hate the gym. My doctor suggested doing some exercises at home to keep my body strong and healthy. I'm not one for that kind of thing, but it set me thinking. I heard on the radio that doing the vacuuming can be pretty good exercise, so I decided to do some more of that. I've been doing one room every evening after dinner. This is actually very simple but it's made climbing stairs easier. I just get less out of breath now - and it keeps the house clean."

3. Involving friends and family

Whatever activities you choose to do, getting other people involved can be really helpful for keeping on track:

- Tell people about your activities and why it is important to you to get active – people like to be helpful and if they know what you are doing and why, it will be easier for them to help
- Lots of activities can be done with others to make them more sociable and fun – why not ask someone to join you, they might want to get active too! See Sally's story and the next page for more ideas.
- If you find it hard to remember to do your activities, you could ask someone to remind you or just to ask how you're doing from time to time
- Let others know how you're getting on – they can celebrate your successes with you and can help if you are struggling.

More ideas to be get active with others

More ways to get active with others:

- Visit galleries, museums and gardens with friends and family
- Join a group, like a dance class or walking group
- Try some volunteer activities
- Play games at the park or in the garden with your grandchildren
- Go cycling or walking in the countryside with friends at the weekend

If would like to meet new people, Age UK and the University of the Third Age (U3A) run many social groups and activities across the UK. Visit the Useful Links page on the Getting Active main menu to find out more about these groups.

Sally's Story

"When my husband, James, and I retired several years ago we became a lot less active. I have some problems with my back and James has a walking stick, so it seemed easier just to sit and watch TV.

But it's boring to be in the house all the time, and so a few months ago James suggested that maybe we go to the local museum once a week for a look around. There's plenty of places to rest in the museum, so it's easier for him than walking round town or the shops. We take our time and always have a cup of tea before we go home.

We both noticed feeling more cheerful after our trips, so we've started going to other places too. So long as there are places to rest, we can both get out to enjoy some exercise."

4. Other ideas to be more active

There are also many other ways to get more active and become healthier. You might like to try other sports, leisure activities or hobbies such as:

- Cycling
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Dancing
- Gardening
- Playing with the grandchildren

No matter what the activity is, it all counts towards improving your health and making you feel better.

Not for you? If you feel that the ideas about getting more active seem a bit too tricky, or just aren't for you, don't worry, Active Lives can still help! You might prefer to try out the other sections of Active Lives on building strength and balance or taking breaks from sitting

Using a step counter

Using a step counter is a great way to help you get active. Research shows that using a step counter is really helpful because you can see how far you walk every day. Here are some things you can do with a step counter:

- Look at how much you walk on a typical day
- Set yourself daily or weekly step goals
- Compare your steps each day with someone else
- Work out how many steps it takes to cover a set distance (like to the shop)

Setting Goals

Setting a goal is a good way to help you keep going with Active Lives.

Think about the activities you already do. There is probably an easy way to do a bit more.

You can either pick from the list or write in your own. You might like to write in your own activities if you want to set a more specific goal for one of the suggested activities, like **walking the dog, cycling with friends, or a 5 mile walk.**

I will get more active by...

- walking*
- gardening*
- bowls*
- housework*
- dancing*
- swimming*
- cycling*
- _____
- _____
- _____

It's easier to meet goals if you **plan how you are going to fit them into your daily life**. For each activity, set how many days this week you want to do your chosen activities and how long you want to spend on them.

Activity	How many days?	How many minutes per day?

It's a good idea to write down your goals and put them in a place you will see them, like on a noticeboard or fridge.

You can use the table on the next page to do this.



My Goals

	Activity...	On...	For...
Goal 1			
Goal 2			
Goal 3			