



## EXERCISE AND STRESS: GET MOVING TO MANAGE STRESS

Getting active is great for reducing stress and naturally boosting your feel-good endorphins. Best of all, you don't have to be an Olympic medallist to benefit from its stress-relieving properties because virtually all forms of exercise can help you better manage your stress levels. Here we explain the connection between exercise and stress relief and why exercise should be a key element in your stress management plan

**Exercise increases your overall health and sense of well-being and also has some direct stress-busting benefits:**



### **It pumps up your endorphins.**

Physical activity helps to bump up the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins.



### **It's meditation in motion.**

After a fast-paced walk, you'll often find that you've forgotten the day's irritations and concentrated only on your body's movements. As you begin to regularly shed your daily tensions through movement and physical activity, you may find that this focus on a single task, and the resulting energy and optimism, can help you remain calm and clear in everything that you do.



### **It improves your mood.**

Regular exercise can increase self-confidence and lower the symptoms associated with mild depression and anxiety. It can improve your sleep, which is often disrupted by stress, depression and anxiety and give you a sense of control over your body and your life.



## A successful exercise program begins with a few simple steps

### STEP 1: **Consult with your doctor.**

Consult with your doctor. If you haven't exercised for some time or you have health concerns, you may want to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

### STEP 2: **Walk before you run.**

Build up your fitness level gradually. Excitement about a new program can lead to overdoing it and possibly even injury. For most healthy adults, the NHS recommends at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (such as cycling or fast walking) or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (such as running) plus muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups.

### STEP 3: **Pencil it in.**

Carving out some time to move every day helps you make your exercise program an ongoing priority.

## STICK WITH IT

Here are some tips for sticking with a new routine or reinvigorating a tired workout:

### **Set SMART goals.**

Write down specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-limited goals. If your primary goal is to reduce stress in your life and recharge your batteries, your specific goals might include committing to walking three times a week.

### **Change up your routine.**

If you've always been a competitive sportsman/woman, take a look at less competitive options that may help with stress reduction, such as online Pilates or yoga classes.

### **Find a friend.**

Knowing that someone is waiting for you to show up for a walk can be a powerful incentive. Walking with a friend or family member often brings a new level of motivation and commitment to your workouts.

### **Exercise in increments.**

Even brief bouts of activity offer benefits. For instance, if you can't fit in one 30-minute walk, try three 10-minute walks instead. What's most important is making regular physical activity part of your lifestyle.

### **Whatever you do, don't think of exercise as just one more thing on your to-do list.**

Find an activity you enjoy – whether it's an active tennis match with someone from your household or a meditative meander down to a local park and back – and make it part of your regular routine. Any form of physical activity can help you unwind and become an important part of your approach to easing stress.

