

## tips for enjoying activity

- > Choose something you enjoy. You may like to try a number of different kinds of activities or just stick to one.
- > Choose activities that suit you. You may prefer to exercise alone, or you might like to combine exercise with spending time with friends, family, whanau or co-workers. Being active with others not only enhances mental health but it can help keep you motivated too.
- > Remember to drink water. Hydration is important, especially if you are taking psychiatric medications.
- > Set some short and long-term goals, but make them realistic. You may want to write down some comments after you've been active to see how you've progressed in a couple of months time.
- > Don't beat up on yourself – if you miss a day it's not the end of the world. There will always be a chance to try again.
- > Don't let cost be a barrier. You don't have to go to an upmarket gym or wear designer gear. Being out in the fresh air is free and nature can lift the spirits. Outdoor light can improve mood, especially during the winter months.
- > Create a positive environment. For example, you might like to work out at home to your favourite music, or read a novel while you exercise.
- > Consult your GP if you are unsure about how active to be or if you experience any unexplained pain, dizziness or shortage of breath during activity, particularly if you are taking medication or have any physical problems (e.g. heart, blood pressure, arthritis) that could be affected by physical activity. GPs and practice nurses are increasingly giving 'Green' Prescriptions to increase activity and support lifestyle change.

Do what you can and enjoy what you do!

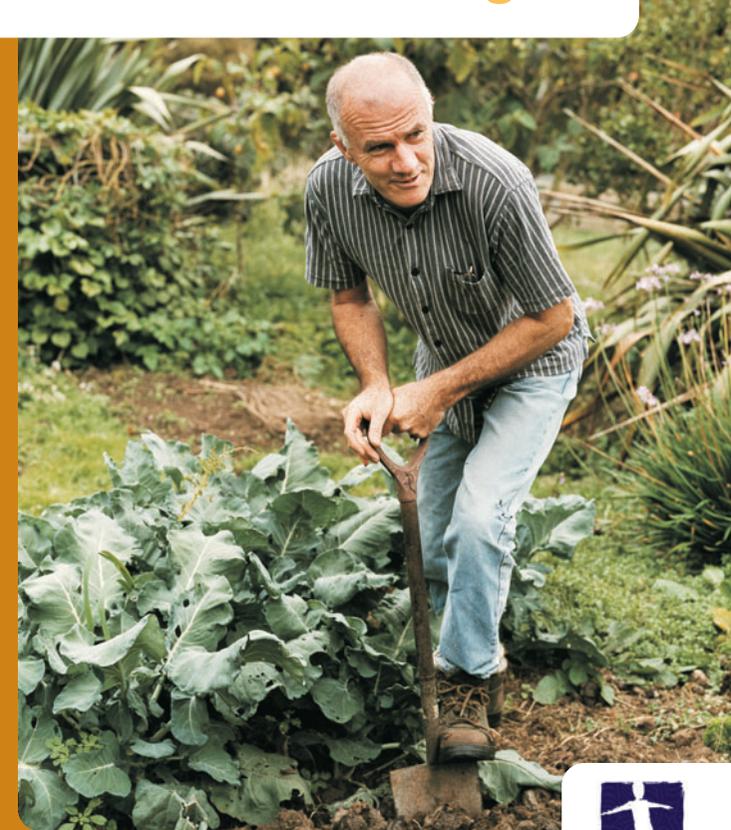


Push Play is a nationwide SPARC campaign to get more people more active more often. The campaign aims to increase awareness about the benefits of regular, moderate, physical activity – and how easy it is to get active.

Call 0800 ACTIVE (0800 22 84 83) or visit [www.pushplay.org.nz](http://www.pushplay.org.nz) to find out more.

**“If all the benefits  
of physical activity  
could be put into a pill,  
everyone would take it.”**

## physical activity for mental wellbeing



Out of the Blue



Mental Health  
Foundation  
of New Zealand

[www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)

Working to improve the mental health of all people  
and communities in New Zealand Aotearoa



Mental Health  
Foundation  
of New Zealand

*There is increasing research into the relationship between physical activity and mental health.*

*Evidence shows that at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity*

*physical activity on most days of the week can improve mood and decrease anxiety and stress. Physical activity is also thought to have a role in preventing serious mental illness such as depression.*

*One definition of mental health is that it is 'a positive sense of wellbeing and of being able to cope with the pressures of life.' Most of us experience changes in our moods from time to time and can have periods where we feel down or situations that make us anxious or stressed. Physical activity is for everyone regardless of age. It gives both a sense of wellbeing and a healthy glow!*



**“Snack on physical activity... feast on the benefits.”**



## **the benefits of being active**

Physical activity releases endorphins into your blood stream. These are the body's natural painkillers and are responsible for the pleasant 'feel good' factor often felt after being active.

Physical activity improves muscle and heart function, increases blood flow to the brain and increases the efficiency of brain chemicals. It can also promote better sleep. There is some evidence that being active can improve cognitive functioning in older people.

Physical activity has psychological benefits too. It can:

- improve self-esteem
- give you a sense of control over your life
- promote a sense of positive achievement
- help with weight control
- provide opportunities for socialising and making new friends.

## **how much physical activity should I do?**

At least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most days of the week is the recommended amount for adults. And the good news is, you don't have to do it all at once. Activity can be built up throughout the day. For example, three short sessions of brisk walking are as good as one long walk. Don't overdo it. Moderate intensity physical activity is better than punishing routines, and there are dangers in obsessive exercising. You should feel pleasantly tired after any physical activity.

## **what sort of physical activity?**

All forms of physical activity rate highly when it comes to promoting good health and mental wellbeing. Some studies that focused on depression found the most benefits came from aerobic activity such as brisk walking, running and cycling or resistance activity, such as lifting weights in the gym.

There is a huge range of things you can do including:

- walking
- jogging
- swimming
- tennis
- dancing
- yoga
- going to the gym
- aerobics
- weight training
- playing team sports such as soccer, netball, badminton and touch football.

Don't forget that day-to-day activities such as household chores, walking the dog, playing with the kids and taking the stairs at work instead of the lift can help raise your daily physical activity quota. Any activity that gets you moving physically, improves strength or extends your range of movement is likely to increase your 'feel good' factor.