



HEALTHY
MINDS MATTER

STRENGTHEN your mind



Did you know that physical activity keeps your body and mind healthy? Moving your body daily is something you can do to improve your health! There are different types of physical activity that can strengthen your body and mind. Studies show that both aerobic activity (e.g., cycling, running, walking) (Rendi et al., 2008) and anaerobic activity (e.g., resistance training, flexibility training, yoga) can promote better mental health (Phillips et al., 2003).

Did you know that the new *Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines 2011* recommend that adults should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in 10 minute sessions or more. It's also good for adults to do strength training activities at least two days per week. However, according to the 2011 Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS), only 15% of adults meet these new physical activity guidelines, (Colley et al., 2011).

When you're physically active you'll enjoy some or all of the following benefits:

- **The release of brain chemicals (i.e., endorphins).** This can lift your mood and reduce anxiety.
- **Meet new people.** This can reduce feelings of being alone or unsupported. Participating in a club or on a sport team is a great way to socialize and meet new people.
- **A new focus and a sense of purpose.** New physical activity goals can give you something positive to focus on and work towards.
- **Boost your self-esteem.** It can improve the way you look and how you feel about yourself.
- **Increase your self-confidence.** Physical activities that require you to slowly master a skill (e.g., an overhand serve in tennis) can give you confidence once you have achieved that skill.
- **Improve your ability to concentrate.** It may help you to better plan and complete tasks.
- **Make you feel energized.** This energy may help you do the things you want to do, and make you more successful in reaching your goals.

Build Physical Activity into Your Routine

Many people report lack of time as a reason for not being as active as they should be. However, with a little advance planning, and some creativity, building 150 minutes per week of physical activity into your schedule may be easier than you think!



Ways to get moving	Examples
Get your heart pumping doing daily tasks.	Add a little intensity when you're vacuuming or cleaning your house. If you're in good health, shovel snow instead of using a snow blower.
Plan ahead.	Keep your walking shoes at work and walk during lunch hour or break. Pack a simple and healthy lunch so you'll have extra time to walk during your lunch hour.
Join or create an exercise group.	Start a walking group which walks at a regular time during the day. Look into mall walking groups during the winter months.
Choose physical activity classes that are available in your community.	Local community centres now offer a variety of classes (e.g., yoga, badminton, dance).
Choose activities that don't need a gym or equipment.	Try walking outside or turn on the music and dance for 10 minutes when inside.
Set realistic goals.	Start walking 10 to 15 minutes at a time, three times a day. Slowly increase your goal to build 150 minutes of physical activity per week.
Take time for yourself and refresh your mind.	Take a break at work or home and do something to be physically active.
Make moving a part of your routine.	If weather permits, park at the far end of the parking lot. When possible, use the stairs instead of the elevator.
Take on activities that you enjoy.	If you really like to swim, then include swimming in your activity plan. Don't include swimming in your routine if you don't like getting wet.

Stick With It!

Once you begin a physical activity routine, sticking with it can be a challenge. Some things that you can do to help you stay on track are:

- **Remind yourself of the reasons why you started in the first place.**
- **Be aware of the positive feelings that you have as a result of being active daily.**
- **Get support.** Be active with friends, co-workers or family. Someone who supports you and your goals.
- **Record your success.** In your monthly calendar, write down every time you are active, what you did, and how you felt.
- **Imagine yourself reaching your goal.** Picture yourself finishing the charity walk that you entered, or fitting into your favourite jeans.
- **Restart your engine.** If something forces you to stop being active, don't let it get you down. Instead, start moving again when you're able to.

Moving Forward

By moving your body every day, you can strengthen your body and mind. By being active, you can also lower your risk of heart disease, certain types of cancer, diabetes, and depression. So, do the best thing you can for your health and build physical activity into your day, every day.

For more information on physical activity, visit these websites:

- Minding Our Bodies: Physical activity for mental health at www.mindingourbodies.ca
- Canada's Physical Activity Guide at www.csep.ca/english/view.asp?x=804



References:

- Colley, R.C., Garriguet, D., Janssen, I., Craig, C.L., Clarke, J., & Tremblay, M. S. (2011). *Physical activity of Canadian adults: Accelerometer results from the 2007 to 2009 Canadian Health Measures Survey (Catalogue no. 82-003-XPE)*. Health Reports, 22 (1), 1-8. Retrieved September 20, 2010 from the Statistics Canada website: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2011001/article/11396-eng.htm>
- Phillips, W.T., Kiernan, M., & King, A.C. (2003). Physical Activity as a Nonpharmacological Treatment for Depression: A Review. *Complementary Health Practice Review*, 8(2): 139-152.
- Rendi M., Szabo A., Szabo T., Velenczei A., & Kovacs A. (2008). Acute psychological benefits of aerobic exercise: A field study into the effects of exercise characteristics. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 13(2):180-184.

