Fitness & Being Active
Employee Wellbeing Guide
March 2017

Why is it important to be active?

Fitness is not about being athletic. It's about having plenty of energy to do your daily activities and a bit more besides. An inactive person has the same risk of developing coronary heart disease as a smoker. Inactivity also contributes to the development of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and stress.

Being active has many health benefits besides reducing the risk of disease. It helps you to:
- Feel more energetic;
- Greater concentration;
- Relax and sleep better;
- Maintain or achieve a healthy weight;
- Develop more strength and suppleness;
- Look more toned and confident;
- Retain your independence as you grow older.

How much activity do I need to do?

It is recommended that you do 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days of the week. The activity should be enough to make you feel warmer and breathe more heavily, but it should not leave you gasping for breath or unable to talk and be active at the same time.

If you haven't been active for a while, this may seem daunting. So, make 30 minutes of continuous activity your overall goal, but have smaller targets to start with; 10 minutes initially, then build up to 20 minutes and finally 30 minutes on 5 days out of 7 per week. Gradually build up not only the duration but also increase the intensity of the activity you do as you start to feel fitter and more confident.

What type of activity should I do?

Ideally your activity should be something that you can incorporate into your everyday life and that you will enjoy. A variety of activities will increase the effectiveness of your efforts and stop you becoming bored. Some suggestions include:

- Brisk walking at lunch time (or anytime!)
- Cycling
- Digging/gardening
- Tennis, squash or other racquet sports
- Circuit training in the local park
- Golf

- Aqua aerobics
- Pilates
- Horse riding
- Football, rugby and other team sports
- Yoga
- Kayaking
- Tai chi
- Swimming
- Spinning classes
- Skiing and snowboarding
- Running/jogging
- Energetic housework
- Water polo
- Aerobics classes at a gym
- Rock climbing
- Hill walking
- Bowling
- Judo, karate and other martial arts
- Gymnastics
- Windsurfing, waterskiing and other water sports
- Dancing - Salsa, rock and roll or jive (anything energetic!)
- Using a trampoline
- Roller blading and in-line skating
- And even 'Wii fit

Remember, don't overdo it! If you feel any pain, dizziness, nausea or feel unwell when doing an activity, **stop!** If it has been a long time since you exercised or if you have a medical condition, it is probably advisable to talk to your GP before you start.

Do not try to exercise within an hour of a heavy meal or if you are feeling unwell.

I don't have time to be active, what can I do?

Even if you have a busy lifestyle, try to make time to be active. Some suggestion and ideas about how to do this are set out below:

- For short distances walk briskly rather than take the car. It probably won't take much longer as you lose time finding the car keys, waiting at traffic signals and parking;

- Park the car further away from the place you're visiting and walk the remainder of the distance;

- Use the stairs rather than lifts or escalators;

- Don't sit for longer than 30 minutes without moving around;

- 30 intense minutes is all it will take to increase your health;

- Involve your family or friends. If they're joining in the activity they won't have as much opportunity to deter you.

Remember 30 minutes is only a short period of time out of a day.

Try keeping a diary for a week and identifying gaps in your day when you may be able to be more active, even if the time is broken down into shorter 10 minute sessions.

Being more active often means that you can do things more efficiently, thus ending up making yourself more time.