



Many studies have shown that by participating in simple, regular activities such as swimming, running, walking, cycling or working out at the gym, you can help manage and even prevent mild to moderate forms of mental illness*.



How can it help?

There are a number of reasons that keeping physically fit can help you stay mentally healthy including:

- Helps lift your mood
- Increases your energy levels
- Helps with a good night's sleep
- Increases your wellbeing
- Helps block out negative thoughts and/or distract you from daily worries
- Helps prevent the feeling of being alone and provides an opportunity to socialise

How to get started?

Getting started can often be the hardest obstacle to overcome. Especially for those who feel drained, tired and unmotivated.

Here are a few simple tips to help get you underway:



START SMALL: start with something simple and plan to build it up gradually. For example, plan small daily activities such as going to the shops or doing some gardening. By starting here you can build-up your confidence and slowly start to take on more energetic activities such as going for a jog or taking your pushbike out for a ride.



MAKE IT FUN: pick activities that you find enjoyable, or used to find enjoyable. By doing this, it'll be easier for you to complete them each day and will help leave you with a satisfied, relaxed and content feeling.



BE SOCIAL: people suffering from mental illness often don't feel like socialising with others. Unfortunately, this often increases the sense of isolation and loneliness, making it harder to recover. For this reason, it's really important for people to try to include others in their activities – whether it is a family member, friend or colleague. By keeping connected with other people, you'll feel an increased sense of confidence, wellbeing and accountability.



MAKE A PLAN: creating a routine can help you commit to the exercise. Be sure to include some form of activity each day and stick to it as closely as possible. No need to worry if you miss a day or shorten/lengthen a session, just move onto the next one and focus on what's in front of you.

Who can help?

There are many different people, support networks and organisations who can help you create and maintain a physically active lifestyle. Some of these include:



EMPLOYER: employers will generally offer some form of employee assistance program whether it's a dedicated in-house resource or a contractor. Check with your Human Resources team to find out what's available to you.



DOCTOR: your General Practitioner will be able to provide you with advice and information about the benefits of exercise and how it can help combat depression. They'll also be able to provide a referral to a qualified exercise physiologist covered under Medicare.



LOCAL SPORTING CLUBS: take a look around your local community and find out what sporting clubs and/or gymnasiums are available. Many of them will offer simple classes such as yoga, walking groups and be able to help with the development of a personal fitness plan.



COMMUNITY CENTRES: your local community centre or neighbourhood group will likely hold affordable events which are open to the general public such as aerobics, yoga, tai chi, dancing and walking groups. Take a look at your local councils website to find out what ones are available to you.