

When we are less active our physical and mental health can suffer. Our brains and bodies were built for moving about and doing things, and there is an incredible range of different ways **we can move**:

... **climbing, running, lifting, reaching, walking, standing, catching, throwing, pottering about, making things, carrying, dancing, stretching ...**

The original way humans lived all these activities would have been happening to get food and water, find shelter and keep our clan safe and working together. This meant that

- 🔄 All activities helped meet our basic needs, or develop our strength and skills
- 🔄 All activities had a purpose or were done for 'fun' (playfully or as sports)
- 🔄 Many activities were very meaningful
- 🔄 Most activities were done in with group of people
- 🔄 Music, singing or banter often went on at the same time
- 🔄 Most activities happened in a natural landscape, among plants and animals.

Yet like all animals we have an instinct to save energy. This is why we've created so many machines to move us from place to place, perform tasks, and generally 'make life easier'. This means most of us nowadays don't need to do much physical activity to get through each day, and almost everyone can benefit from being more physically active.

We are much more likely to be motivated to do **physical** activities, which

- ☑️ have a meaning or purpose,
- ☑️ and/or are fun,
- ☑️ and/or have a social aspect
- ☑️ and/or happen in a natural environment

**All physical activity counts! One important kind of activity often goes unnoticed ....**

### It's NEAT: 'non-exercise activity'

Sitting isn't quite "as bad as smoking", but sitting for 3 hours or more each day may significantly shorten your life. ***It is recommended that we avoid sitting for long periods.***

**The main 'causes' of sitting time are cars, TVs and other 'screens', sitting office work.**

Examples of "non-exercise" "not sitting" or "general" activity include

**Frequently standing up from sitting - every 15 - 20 minutes.**

**Standing-up activities** like:

preparing food, washing and drying up and putting away, DIY, sorting and tidying, browsing in a shop, market or hedgerow, chatting standing up.

**Moving about** to fetch or carry things in the home or workplace

Fidgeting

Stretching

So even if you can't do what people call exercise, you can still be more active. How much time that you currently spend sitting could be replaced with NEAT?

There are a number of quite good apps to help with NEAT and other forms of activity, and there is a recent review of some here: <https://www.wholefamilyliving.com/apps-to-help-you-move-more-at-work/>

**Sit-stand desk risers** are a very useful way of creating NEAT for office workers. Permanent standing desks are not idea for most people.

### Exercise and Weight Loss

We know that exercise is very seldom responsible for significant weight loss on its own. NEAT on the other hand can burn off far more calories than 'exercise'. This is because most 'exercise' doesn't go on for very long, whereas if you don't sit down much and spend most of the day moving about you will use a lot of energy over time.

Activities that count as 'exercise' like those in the next two sections, are also good for your mental and physical health. They will make you fitter, but probably not thinner.

## All physical activity counts:

it doesn't matter if we call it a hobby, pass-time, social activity, sport or 'exercise':

Remember we are far more likely to keep doing any physical activity if there is a social element, if it means something to us and if it happens in a green space like a park, garden or countryside.

By doing this we are often meeting our emotional needs, boosting our mental and emotional health, and if we pick good activities, we'll be getting something done or having fun too.

## Building up activity levels:

|                         |                  |  |
|-------------------------|------------------|--|
| Start by increasing the | <b>FREQUENCY</b> | - how often you do it                    |
| Then build up the       | <b>DURATION</b>  | - the length of time you do the activity |
| Then build up the       | <b>INTENSITY</b> | - how hard you do the activity           |

Often the same activity can be done

- 'moderately': that is so that you are a little out of breath but you could still talk normally -
- or 'intensely' so that you'd have to talk in short phrases.

Examples of **things you can do moderately, OR intensely** are:

Walking, cycling, swimming, gardening, dancing, some sports, exercise classes

## How do I know if it is moderate or intense?!

Moderate Activity makes you pleasantly breathless, slightly sweaty, so you can talk normally but not sing.

Intense Activity leaves you more breathless, sweating a lot, and you have to talk in short phrases.

**Moderate Activity.** Some moderate activities can be easy to fit into our routines

**Recommendation: two and a half hours spread evenly through each week\***

Walking.- how often do you use a car or public transport when you could walk? Getting off a few stops early or parking at the 'wrong' end of the car park can all help.

Gardening

Yoga, pilates, tai-chi, - useful for relaxing before bed or limbering up before work

Gentle cycling - could you do some shopping or commuting by bike?

Climbing the stairs.

and/or

## Intense Activity

**Recommendation: one and a quarter hours spread evenly through each week\***

Many team and competitive sports: football, squash, rugby, hockey

Hiking and Mountaineering

Competitive or long-distance cycling

HIIT (high intensity interval training) and Circuits

Sprinting and Long distance running

\*The time recommendations are a target, and the idea is that there is a mixture, each minute of intense activity 'counts' for two minutes of 'moderate'.

**REMEMBER - ENJOY YOUR ACTIVITIES!!**