

IS THIS FOR ME?

This booklet aims to help you get more active now ... and stay active.

It will be especially helpful for you if you're not very active at the moment (that is, if you're not doing the recommended amount of physical activity – 30 minutes of moderate activity on at least five days a week), and if you're looking for ways of doing more.

It's especially important to stay active.

Whether you're working or not, whether you're in good health or if you have a health condition, this booklet has lots of useful information to help you get started... and keep going. Maybe you're not yet convinced of the benefits of physical activity.

Or maybe you've been meaning to do more activity but something always seems to get in the way. Or perhaps you're already doing some activity but think you should be doing more.

Being active doesn't mean having to join a gym or an exercise class or play a sport, but it could include fitting some activity into your daily routine – even simple things like doing more walking.

You'll be surprised how a small change in your level of physical activity can make a big difference to your health and well-being. So go on – make a start today!



If you are of South Asian origin

Compared with the rest of the UK population, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi men and women are less likely to be as active as they should be. If you are of South Asian origin, your risk of developing coronary heart disease is significantly higher than that of the rest of the UK population. Regular physical activity is an effective way of lowering that risk.

SO HOW ACTIVE AM I?

Answer the questions below to help you find out how active you are.

1. Walking

During the last week, did you walk briskly enough to make you feel warm and slightly out of breath for more than 15 minutes at a time?

For example, it might be walking to the shops or to work, or going out for a walk with family or friends. In the box below, write down how much time you spent walking in this way.

2. Other activity

During the last week, have you done any activity other than walking, for more than 15 minutes at a time, that made you feel warm and slightly out of breath?

For example, swimming, dancing, cycling, aerobic classes or squash.

In the box below, write down how much time you spent doing these sorts of activities.

	1. Walking Number of minutes	2. Other activity Number of minutes	
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			TOTAL for the week =
Sunday			
TOTAL			

SO HOW DID YOU DO?

What was your total for the week?

Less than 150 minutes.

You are an inactive person. We suggest you make a start on page 6.

150 minutes or more, but you are active on less than five days a week.

You need to increase your level of activity. We suggest you start at page 10.

150 minutes or more, and you are active on more than five days a week.

That's good, but you need to keep it up. To help you keep up your level of activity see pages 10 and 16.



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

If the average woman over 35 spent 30 minutes walking the dog, she would use up about the same amount of calories as she would if she spent 11 minutes doing step aerobics.

WHY IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IMPORTANT FOR ME?

Being active will make a difference to the quality of your life. Once you start you'll soon experience the benefits.

The benefits of physical activity include:

- looking better
- better body shape and appearance
- feeling better
- more energy
- sleeping better
- helping to reduce stress and anxiety
- helping you to relax more easily
- more self-confidence
- better concentration
- reducing isolation and helping you to stay in touch with other people
- meeting people and making friends
- achievement – learning something new and being successful
- enjoyment – activity can be great fun and something you can do with other people.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TACKLES HEALTH PROBLEMS...

It helps to manage and control:

- weight (and body fat)
- high blood pressure
- cholesterol levels
- heart disease, including angina
- type 2 diabetes
- joint and bone problems, such as arthritis.

And helps prevent illness by reducing the risk of:

- heart disease and stroke
- some cancers (such as colon cancer)
- osteoporosis (thinning of the bones).

And it also:

- boosts energy levels
- helps improve muscle mass, tone and strength
- maintains stronger bones and muscles
- helps you relax and reduce stress
- maintains joint mobility and suppleness.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

If the average woman over 35 spent 30 minutes doing fast ballroom dancing, she would use up about the same amount of calories as she would if she spent 13 minutes cycling.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I BE DOING?

For general health benefit, adults of all ages should achieve a total of at least 30 minutes' moderate activity a day on five or more days of the week.

'Moderate' activity means any activity that leaves you feeling warm and breathing more heavily than usual.

Why 30 minutes?

Any increase in activity will benefit your health, but research shows that 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on five or more days of the week is the amount needed to keep the lungs, heart, muscles and bones in good working order.

You can split the 30 minutes up into two bouts of 15 minutes, or three bouts of 10 minutes.

If 30 minutes a day sounds a lot to you

If 30 minutes a day seems a lot, start with five minutes at least three times a day and build up gradually to the 30-minute target.

If you can't manage 30 minutes a day – for example, because you're limited by a health condition such as arthritis – don't worry. Any amount of additional activity will make a difference.

"I DECIDED I HAD TO DO SOMETHING."

"I still feel young, but I can see the signs of ageing – thickening waist, saggy skin. I looked at myself in the mirror one day and decided I had to do something. I'm not one for the gym, so I started walking more. I walk whenever I can now, and I feel much better for it." **Rose, 53**



WHAT SORT OF THINGS SHOULD I BE DOING?

You need to do three main types of activity to help you keep healthy and well – activities for **stamina, strength and flexibility and mobility**.

STAMINA ACTIVITIES

Examples:

Brisk walking, aerobics or movement classes, all sorts of dancing, swimming, water aerobics, cycling, or any sports such as badminton.

Why?

Stamina activities help to keep your lungs, heart and circulation healthy and in good working order.

How often?

Aim to do 30 minutes of activity from this group on most days. You can do the 30 minutes in three lots of 10 minutes, or two lots of 15 minutes.

If you're not very active at the moment, as little as 10 minutes a day will help – for example, walking briskly to and from the shops.

Among 16-54 year olds, only 31 in every 100 women and 45 in every 100 men meet the recommended minimum level of 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day five times a week.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

If the average man over 35 spent 30 minutes raking the lawn, he would use up about the same amount of calories as he would if he spent eight minutes running at nine miles per hour.



STRENGTH ACTIVITIES

Examples:

Climbing stairs, walking uphill, lifting and carrying shopping, digging the garden, weight training, pilates, yoga, T'ai Chi, weights or resistance exercises (which you can do at home, in a class or at a gym).

Why?

Strength activities maintain muscle and bone strength. Stronger, larger muscles also burn more calories so can help you keep to a healthy weight. Strength activities will also help with good posture and balance. And improved muscle strength and tone will also help with better body shape, improving the way you look and feel.

How often?

Try to do some strength activities two or three times a week.

FLEXIBILITY AND MOBILITY ACTIVITIES

Examples:

Gentle bending, reaching and stretching of muscle groups, T'ai Chi, yoga, pilates, dancing, swimming, indoor and outdoor bowls, golf, stretching exercises.

Why?

Flexibility and mobility activities help you to maintain a full range of movement and to stay independent and move more easily as you get older. It also helps to improve sports performance and reduce risk of injury.

How often?

Try to do some flexibility and mobility exercises for a few minutes every day.

Extra benefits!

Some activities will have a combination of benefits. For example, walking can help with stamina and strength. And swimming can help with both stamina and flexibility.

Also ...

Try to cut down on the amount of time you spend sitting down. For example, build in activity breaks at work or while you're watching TV. Take time to stretch and move.

**"NOW THAT I'VE GOT INTO THE ROUTINE,
I FIND I REALLY ENJOY IT."**

"I've always struggled to keep my weight under control. I have a busy job and social life and it just seemed to be such an effort to go to the gym or exercise classes. One day the weather was nice and instead of getting the bus, I decided to walk to work. It only took 30 minutes. It was a lot more pleasant, and didn't really take much longer than the bus! Now that I've got into a routine, I do this every day and find I really enjoy it. I'm getting the health benefits, but it doesn't feel like a chore and I've also managed to keep my weight down." **Paula, 34**

WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?

There are many reasons why some people aren't as active as others. Some are real reasons and some are excuses, but whatever the reason, we need to find a way of overcoming these obstacles and make a start. Do any of these sound familiar to you?

"I DON'T HAVE THE TIME."

Make physical activity your priority and plan to make time for some activity every day, even if it's just for a few minutes. Find a certain time each day to do some activity. For example, stretching whenever you're waiting for the kettle to boil or during a TV break, walking more briskly than usual, or always using the stairs instead of a lift or escalator.

"I'M TOO TIRED."

You may be surprised that, once you start being more active, you'll have more energy, and feel less tired and more relaxed. If you find that you're very tired, and unable to perform simple exercises, check with your GP that there's no underlying physical reason for this.

"I'M NOT OLD ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT THIS YET."

We know that our bodies start to decline physically after the age of 30, and being inactive speeds up that decline. It's never too soon to start investing in your future.

"I HAVE NO-ONE TO DO IT WITH."

Invite a friend, relative, neighbour or work colleague to go for a lunchtime walk with you. If you join a class or group you will meet new people and make new friends. The BHF has a range of fantastic fundraising events all over the UK helping you to get active. Most attract hundreds of participants so you don't have to do it alone. Visit our website [bhf.org.uk/events](https://www.bhf.org.uk/events) to find out more.

"I'M TOO EMBARRASSED."

You don't have to go to a gym dressed in sportswear to get active. You could do some brisk walking wearing your normal clothes. You might find it easier if you start by doing some physical activity with a friend.

"IT'S TOO EXPENSIVE."

Walking is free and so are many other lifestyle activities such as walking up and down the stairs several times a day or doing some strength exercises at home. Find out about local groups.

"THERE'S NOTHING TO DO WHERE I LIVE."

If that's the case, be active around your home. And walk to and from local places whenever you can – for example, when you go to the shops, or to a friend's house.

"I'VE NEVER BEEN THE SPORTY TYPE."

You don't need to be sporty to live an active life. There are many other activities – like gardening, dancing or an exercise to music class. Why not accept a challenge and try something new?

"I MIGHT INJURE MYSELF."

Whenever you do some activity, start slowly and work at your own pace. There's no need to overdo it. If you take part in moderate activities like walking or swimming, it's unlikely that you'll get injured.

"MY HEALTH ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH."

Physical activity can help with most health conditions. Ask your doctor for advice on what sort of activity would help you. There are some more ideas for people with particular health conditions on page 20.

"I'M GETTING TOO OLD."

You're never too old to make a start and you will still feel the benefits, perhaps sooner than you think! Many clubs and groups are organised for people of all ages.

GETTING STARTED... AND KEEPING GOING

Making a start may be a big challenge. Use the *Action Plan* on the fold out at the back of this booklet to help you make a realistic and personal action plan. Below are some things you can do to help you get started... and keep going:

Choose an activity you enjoy

We're all more motivated if we're doing something we enjoy.

Start small and progress at your own rate

Don't be over-ambitious. Make sure you set yourself targets that you can easily achieve – things that can be repeated and can become part of your everyday routine.

Vary your activities

This will help to avoid boredom and maintain your interest.
Think of changing the time and place. Or maybe try a new activity.

Be social

Involve a friend, neighbour, work colleague, relative or 'activity buddy' in your activity routine. You can support each other and you will have company while you're doing your activity too.

Get into the habit

No matter how small, plan an activity routine for yourself. Plan a time in your day when you will do your activity. Use your diary or a calendar if it helps.

Use reminders

Put a note on your action plan where you will see it – by the front door, on the fridge or by the kettle – to remind you to do some activity. Put your walking shoes near the door. If you sometimes go swimming or to the gym, keep your bag packed and ready to go.

Choose a role model

Do you have a friend who is already regularly active? Talk to them and use them as a role model and to support you.

MAKING IT SAFE AND ENJOYABLE

You will want to make sure that your first steps into activity are safe and enjoyable. Here's how you can achieve this.

- build up your activity level gradually – both the amount of time you spend doing the activity and the intensity. Start off slowly and progress gradually at your own pace. There's no rush
- wear comfortable clothes and supportive shoes
- when you're doing any activity, start slowly for the first few minutes and build up gradually. At the end, spend some time slowing down gradually
- do some stretching exercises after your activity to help avoid muscle soreness and injury
- if you have any condition you are taking medicine for and are not sure whether this will be affected by activity, or if you have any concerns about your health or fitness, tell your GP about the activities you're planning to do
- remember to drink water before, during and after your activity. Don't wait until you're thirsty
- don't take part in physical activity if you have a high temperature or feel unwell
- stop exercising if you feel pain or feel dizzy, or if you feel unwell or very tired
- learn to listen to your body. If you feel discomfort or pain when being active, stop and get advice from your doctor
- avoid walking alone at night, and keep to well populated and well lit areas
- if you're cycling, wear a helmet and reflective clothing. Use lights if you're cycling at night.

Regular moderate activity is better than doing occasional bursts of vigorous activity, or very long bouts of activity.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

If the average man over 35 spent 30 minutes washing the car, he would use up about the same amount of calories as he would if he spent 10 minutes playing competitive football.



HOW AM I DOING SO FAR?

After a few weeks, you may have had some successes as well as some difficulties. Ask yourself, “How am I doing so far?” Why not revisit your personal goals and targets. If you have achieved them, well done – now’s the time to set some new targets. If not, ask yourself why, and look at what you can do to get back on track.

Here are some common examples:

Common disruptions	How to get back
After a holiday or illness	Take it easy when you begin again, starting with small amounts of activity and building up.
Made a start but not active every day?	Try and think of some activities that can become a routine part of your life.
It all seems like too much effort	Are you trying to do too much? Set some new short-term goals and reward yourself when you achieve them.
Family and home responsibilities are getting in the way	Plan how to deal with your other commitments but also plan to do some different activities that you can fit around them.
You find it’s no fun doing things by yourself	Invite a friend to join you so you can support each other. Or join a group or club.
Long spells of bad weather make outdoor activities unpleasant	Switch to indoor activities at home or at an indoor leisure centre until the weather gets better.

WHAT IF I HAVE...?

Most health problems can be helped by regular physical activity, but if you have a health problem, check with your doctor about the amount and type of activity that is suitable for you.

If you have...

Heart problems or diabetes Regular, moderate stamina activities like walking, swimming and cycling are particularly important. You should only do strength training (such as weight training) under supervision. If you have angina you should avoid doing strength exercises.

Asthma and other lung problems Swimming, walking and cycling are less likely to bring on an asthma attack, especially if your asthma is controlled. If you have other lung problems such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, ask your doctor what activities might be suitable for you.

Back pain Activities such as walking or swimming can help, but avoid heavier sporting activities that involve lifting, twisting, pulling and pushing.

Cancer Your ability to be active will depend on your condition and the treatment you are having. Your doctor or specialist can advise you about what you can do.

Mental health problems Daily moderate activities such as walking, cycling and swimming as well as strength training exercises two or three times a week are beneficial for your mental wellbeing. Regular exercise is a good way to deal with stress and anxiety.



HEALTHY EATING

To help you keep to a healthy weight – or to lose weight if you're overweight – you need to be physically active and eat a healthy diet. This will help to keep your heart healthy too.

- aim to eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables each day
- cut down on fat, especially saturated fat. Saturated fats are found, for example, in: dairy foods such as butter, hard cheese and cream; in fatty meats and meat products; in biscuits and cakes; and in coconut oil and palm oil
- aim to eat two portions of fish a week. One of the portions should be oily fish – such as herring, mackerel, pilchards, salmon or trout
- don't add salt to your food, and cut down on processed foods that contain a lot of salt
- if you drink alcohol, drink in moderation.

For more information on healthy eating, see our booklet *Food should be fun... and healthy!* Or, if you want to lose weight see our booklets *So you want to lose weight... for good*, and *Taking control of your weight*.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

TO FIND OUT ABOUT ACTIVITIES IN YOUR LOCAL AREA

- Ask at your local library or local council leisure department. They may have a directory or an online database

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GO TO:

- British Heart Foundation bhf.org.uk/thebeat

BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION (BHF) CONTACTS

HEART HELP LINE

For information and support on anything heart-related, call us on **08450 70 80 70**
Lines open: 9am – 5pm Mon, Tue and Fri. 8am – 6pm Wed and Thur.

HEART HELP ONLINE

For information and support on anything heart-related, visit bhf.org.uk

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

If the average man over 35 spent 30 minutes trimming the shrubs he would use up about the same amount of calories as he would if he spent nine minutes running at nine miles per hour.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

There are lots of different ways to support the BHF:

- for more information about the **BHF credit card**, call **0800 028 2440** or visit **bhf.org.uk/card**
- to find out how you can get involved in BHF events such as sponsored bike rides and walks, call **0845 130 8663** or visit **bhf.org.uk/events**
- for more information on volunteering for the BHF, call **020 7487 9461** or visit **bhf.org.uk/volunteer**

HAVE YOUR SAY

We would welcome your comments to help us produce the best information for you. Why not let us know what you think? Contact us through our website at **bhf.org.uk/contact**. Or, write to us at the address on the back cover.



HOW YOU CAN HELP US

We urgently need your help to keep more hearts beating

As a charity we rely on the generosity of people like you to fund our life-saving work. Thousands of people with heart disease turn to us for help every year and even more will need us in the future. We want to be there for them.

Please donate today and together we can beat heart disease. Thank you.

Please fill in your details below and then complete the form overleaf:

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Other)

Name

Address

Postcode

Phone

Email*

*We would like to keep in touch with you, to let you know your support has made a difference. By supplying your email address you agree that the BHF **may** use this to contact you about our work.

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Please make a donation today.

To make an instant donation, please call **0870 606 3399** quoting reference *The Beat* (Monday – Friday 9am to 5pm) with your credit card details.

Or visit **bhf.org.uk/donate**

Or complete both sides of this form and return to the address shown overleaf.

Please accept my gift of:

£15

£20

Other: £

I enclose a cheque or postal order. (Please make it payable to the British Heart Foundation.)
or please debit the above sum from my:

CAF Charity Card

MasterCard

Visa/Delta

Maestro

Name on card

Card number

Valid from

Expiry date

Issue no.

(Maestro only)

Security code*

* Last 3 digits found on the reverse of your card. **We cannot process your donation without it.**

Signature

Date

Please cut off and return this completed form to: **Supporter Services,
British Heart Foundation, 14 Fitzhardinge Street, London W1H 6DH.**

Thank you.

Are you a taxpayer?

If you are a UK taxpayer, please tick the **first box** so we can **claim back 28p for every £1** you give, at **no extra cost to you.**

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GA1 **Yes**, I am a UK taxpayer and would like the BHF to reclaim the tax on any of the donations I have made in the last six years and any future donations I may make.* Date

GA2 **No**, I am not a UK taxpayer.

* For the BHF to reclaim the tax on your donation you must be paying at least 28p in UK income tax or capital gains tax on every £1 you donate. We cannot process your Gift Aid declaration without your name and address.

Your personal information

The BHF will use your personal information for administration purposes and to provide you with services, products and any information you have requested.

S Please tick here if you **do not** wish the BHF to contact you by phone or mail about our work.

MP02 We may want to share information with other organisations that are in partnership with the BHF and who support our aims and objectives. Please tick the box if you would **prefer us not** to share your details.

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