

Wellbeing Focus

Issue 075 - August 2019

Be more active! The benefits of physical activity

Jodie Knight, Psychological Wellbeing

Practitioner for Vita Health Group.

Physical activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle and benefits both our physical and mental wellbeing. Evidence has shown us that physical activity can improve self-esteem, mood, sleep and energy levels, in addition to reducing our risk of stress, depression, heart disease, diabetes, and dementia.

Physical activity and mental wellbeing

Exercise and physical activity are known to improve low mood and depression. The National Institute of Care and Health Excellence (NICE) specifically recommend physical activity for people experiencing mild to moderate depression. Our bodies produce endorphins when we exercise, which make us feel happier and reduce our perception of pain. It also reduces our levels of adrenaline and cortisol, which are linked to feelings of stress and anxiety.

In addition to improving feelings of low mood and anxiety, exercise can help us to feel better about ourselves through improving our fitness levels, building self-confidence and developing a sense of achievement by meeting our goals.

Exercise can improve sleep in several ways. Physical activity leads to an increase in the amount of time we spend in deep sleep, which is the stage of sleep responsible for physical restoration, and lead to more restful sleep. Being more physically active means that we use more energy during the day, which helps us to feel more tired and find it easier to fall asleep at night.

When we exercise at an intensity that raises our breathing and heart rates, the blood flow to our brain also increases. Research has suggested that exercise increases the volume of the parts of our brain that are responsible for memory and thinking, which is believed to reduce the risk of dementia.



Physical activity and physical wellbeing

Research has shown that regular exercise reduces our risk of physical health problems, including up to a 50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes, up to a 35% lower risk of heart disease and stroke, a 30% lower risk of early death, and up to an 83% lower risk of osteoarthritis. More information on this can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-health-benefits>.

Physical activity increases blood flow and promotes healthy circulation, which is beneficial to our skin skills. Recent research has even suggested that physical activity may keep our skin looking younger for longer!

How much physical activity do I need?

The NHS recommend that 19-64 year olds aim for two and a half hours of physical activity over the course of a week and to try to be active every day. Any activity that requires you to move fast enough to raise your heart rate, and breathe faster and harder will be beneficial to your health.

Physical activity does not necessarily mean playing sports or going to the gym, it can also include activities like walking, dancing, cycling or swimming. You can make being active a regular part of your daily routine by making small changes, for example walking to work instead of driving, taking the stairs instead of the lift or taking messages to your colleagues in person rather than emailing or calling them.

The NHS offer a free 'couch to 5k' running program for beginners. You could try doing this on your own, with a running partner or with a group. More information is available at <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/couch-to-5k-week-by-week>.

Physical activity **is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle** and small changes can make a big difference. Start by setting yourself small, manageable goals. You can even ask your family and friends to help support and motivate you.

Healthy Breakfast Muffins

With a fabulous taste and full of really healthy stuff, this muffin is perfect for a breakfast on the go

Ingredients

- 125g plain flour
- 75g wholemeal flour
- 200g rolled oats
- 75g brown sugar
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 bananas, mashed
- 2 large eggs, separated
- 3 tbsp sunflower oil
- 250ml milk
- 125g blueberries

Other Ideas

1. Add 50g currents to the mixture for a fruity muffin.
2. Substitute 50g of the rolled oats for 50g desiccated coconut.
3. Add 50g chocolate chips of your choice for a naughty but nice breakfast muffin.
4. 50g other dried fruit such as cranberries
5. 50g hazelnuts or other nuts chopped up small.

Method

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine the plain flour, wholemeal flour, oats (or oats and coconut if using), brown sugar, baking powder, cinnamon and salt.
2. Create a well in the centre of the dry ingredients and add the mashed bananas, egg yolks, milk and sunflower oil. Mix together gently with a wooden spoon until a wet batter forms but do not over mix.
3. In a separate bowl whisk the egg whites until soft peaks form.
4. Gently fold the egg whites into the muffin batter along with the blueberries and any other additions you wish to include until everything is mixed through evenly.
5. Divide the muffin mixture between 12 individual muffin cases and place in a preheated oven at 200C/fan 180C/gas mark 6 for 25 minutes until well risen and golden brown on top.
6. The muffins will keep for up to 4-5 days in a sealed tin or plastic container but preferably eaten on the day or day after baking for a fresher muffin. The muffins can also be frozen in a zipped plastic bag, thaw for 1 hour or until defrosted then pop in the oven for 10 minutes to reheat.

 Serves 1 - 12

Recipe from Good Food Community

© WorkplaceWellness 2019.

Information provided in this newsletter is for general information and guidance only. This newsletter is not designed or intended to provide individuals with specific advice or diagnosis in any particular case and is not a substitute for, or an alternative to, seeking specialist advice.

WorkplaceWellness does not accept liability for any loss, additional costs or damages of any kind suffered as a result of any use or inability to use any general information in this publication.

 **vita**
health group

WorkplaceWellness™  RehabWorks