

Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, large print, easy read, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre Tel: 0191 223 2545

Published by the Patient Information Centre

2015 Copyright Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust

Ref, PIC/716/0515 May 2015 V1

[www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic](http://www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic)

Tel: 0191 223 2545

Review date 2018



Follow us  
@ntwnhs



# Benefits of exercise

for mental and  
physical health

Information Leaflet



## How exercise has benefitted NTW service users

“Over the past 8 weeks I have managed to lose 12lbs not quite a dress size but oh so nearly. The support and encouragement has been brilliant in getting me to the community gym which I am going to continue to attend.”

“Exercise has improved my motivation, it adds structure to my days and I feel better about myself after an exercise session.”

“when feeling depressed the gym helps brighten my mood, gives motivation to get out the house, best thing I’ve done was join the gym.”

“Exercise makes me feel better in myself, makes me happy and I don’t experience voices as much.”



“I think the gym is fantastic. Before I was introduced to the gym I was practically housebound, with no real quality of life through fear of going places. I have found that the gym has improved my lifestyle leaps and bounds. I still have my problems but the gym helps with agitation, aggression, depression by giving me a sense of wellbeing.”

Exercise can help reduce symptoms of and lower risk of developing depression	<b>Fact:</b> Exercise increases the release of feel good chemicals (endorphins), increases confidence, self esteem, motivation and energy levels. It provides a positive focus, a distraction from your worries, a challenge and can provide opportunities to increase your social interaction and networks. All of these are shown to reduce symptoms of depression.
Exercise can help reduce stress and anxiety levels	<b>Fact:</b> Exercise produces a relaxation response that serves as a positive distraction from stress and anxiety.

## References

A full list of references is available on request from the Patient Information Centre Tel: 0191 223 2545



## The benefits of exercise for mental and physical health

There are many reasons as to why regular physical activity is good for your body, including

- weight control
- increased energy levels
- reduced risk of developing health conditions and diseases

Physical activity is also extremely beneficial to your mental health. Research suggests that people who exercise regularly are less likely to suffer from

- depression
- anger
- stress

Positive changes to the body lead to an increase in self-esteem but also to a general improvement in mood.

Research suggests that between 40-80% of patients taking antipsychotic medication experience weight gain and that cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes and respiratory disease is more common in patients with mental health illness than in the general population. Up to 75% of deaths in mental health patients are from natural causes, mostly cardiovascular disease, therefore life expectancy is 20% lower than in the general population. Building regular physical activity into daily routines and having a healthy lifestyle can help to prevent/reduce weight gain and reduce the risk of developing disease. We have exercise therapists working within the Trust who can support with this.

Given the overwhelming evidence, it seems obvious that we should all be physically active. It's essential if you want to live a healthy and fulfilling life into old age.

**"If exercise were a pill, it would be one of the most cost-effective drugs ever invented" Dr Nick Cavill**

It's medically proven that people who do regular physical activity have:

- ✓ up to a 35% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
- ✓ up to a 50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes
- ✓ up to a 50% lower risk of colon cancer
- ✓ up to a 20% lower risk of breast cancer
- ✓ a 30% lower risk of early death
- ✓ up to an 83% lower risk of osteoarthritis
- ✓ up to a 68% lower risk of hip fracture
- ✓ a 30% lower risk of falls (among older adults)
- ✓ up to a 30% lower risk of depression
- ✓ up to a 30% lower risk of dementia

Exercise and physical activity can provide something worthwhile in your life. Something that you really enjoy, that gives you a goal to aim for and a sense of purpose.

Here are a few more benefits:

- ✓ improves sleep
- ✓ a natural energy boost
- ✓ improves self esteem
- ✓ improves mood
- ✓ provides a focus in life
- ✓ a sense of achievement
- ✓ reduces anger or frustration
- ✓ improves motivation
- ✓ improves social skills
- ✓ promotes a healthy appetite
- ✓ reduces tension, stress and mental fatigue

**Fact or Fiction**

<p>Fat will turn to muscle</p>	<p><b>Fiction:</b> Muscle and fat are two totally different types of tissue and one cannot turn into the other. Often when people stop exercising they will lose muscle mass due to inactivity. This, along with poor diet will result in an increase in body fat. This can give the impression that muscle is turning to fat when really we are losing muscle mass and fat is being stored.</p>
<p>Exercise reduces your risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, osteoarthritis and dementia</p>	<p><b>Fact:</b> Studies show that doing more than 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate physical activity or an hour of vigorous physical activity every week will reduce your risk of;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coronary heart disease by about 30%.</li> <li>• type 2 diabetes by up to 50%</li> <li>• colon cancer by up to 50%</li> <li>• breast cancer by up to 20%</li> <li>• osteoarthritis by up to 83%</li> <li>• dementia by up to 30%</li> </ul>
<p>Smoking helps manage my mental health condition</p>	<p><b>Fiction:</b> Many people used to believe that smoking was a way for those with Mental Health problems to self medicate or manage their condition. We now know that smoking increases stress levels and that stopping smoking can result in lower levels of self reported stress and higher mood scores</p>
<p>No pain, no gain</p>	<p><b>Fiction:</b> Train smarter, not harder. Even moderate exercise such as walking, swimming or cycling can have fantastic benefits</p>