

Fitness FAQ Sheet



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When should I exercise?

There's no 'right time' to exercise. It depends on the individual. You need to listen to your body. Some people feel rough in the morning, whereas others can hop out of bed and do a 10 mile run. Don't exercise for two to three hours after a heavy meal. If you exercise straight after a large meal, you're likely to experience nausea, stomach cramps (get a 'stitch') and discomfort.



Can I have a snack before exercising?

You can have a small snack before your workout, such as a piece of fruit or a drink. We would advise against snacks that are high in sugar, including soft drinks. You might get a quick energy boost but it'll probably be followed by a sudden energy slump. Choose starchy foods, such as brown bread or bananas, which help keep your energy levels constant during exercise.

Should I warm up before exercise?

Warming up is essential before exercising. If your muscles aren't warm they will be less supple, which can increase your risk of injury. The warm-up process sends oxygen to the muscles, where it works with glucose to produce energy. This ensures that the body works more efficiently, and that your workout gives better results. Start with slow, gentle movements, such as walking, and gradually build the intensity, such as increasing your walking pace to a gentle jog. Eight to 10 minutes will get the muscles ready for higher-intensity activity.



What is aerobic activity?

Aerobic activity is any activity where the body's large muscles move in a rhythmic manner for a continuous period of time. Also called endurance activity, it's great for improving the health of your heart and lungs. Examples include: running, walking, cycling, swimming. Aerobic activity is vital for burning off calories, weight management and general health.

What's the importance of strength training?

Strength-training activities, such as weight lifting, involve short bursts of effort. Strength training burns calories and builds and strengthens muscle. Benefits of strength training include increasing bone density, strengthening joints, and improving balance, stability and posture. It increases your ability to do everyday tasks without getting so tired. The more muscle mass you have, the easier it is to burn calories, even when the body is at rest.



Do I need to stretch?

Stretching helps to improve flexibility, balance and posture. To stretch properly and safely, slowly stretch the muscle just until you feel resistance. Resistance is the point at which you feel a slight pull. It should not be painful. Stop and hold each stretch for 10 - 20 seconds without bouncing. Breathe deeply and regularly. Don't hold your breath. The best time to stretch is after exercise, when your muscles are most supple.

What's the importance of cooling down?

Immediately after your workout, take time to cool down. This gradually lowers your heart rate and allows your body to recover. It may help reduce muscle injury, stiffness and soreness. Walk or continue your activity at a low intensity for five to 10 minutes. It's then an ideal time to stretch, and you're more likely to improve your flexibility.



Should I have a rest day?

With [moderate-intensity aerobic activity](#) (see over), whether it's heavy gardening or cycling, you're encouraged to do a little every day. Adults should do 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week. It's important to rest when you do [vigorous-intensity aerobic activity](#) (see over), such as running. The body repairs and strengthens itself between workouts, and over-training can weaken even the strongest athletes.

What should I drink?

It's important to drink fluid during any exercise that lasts for more than 30 minutes. Water may be enough for low-intensity exercise up to 45-50 minutes. For higher-intensity exercise of 45-50 minutes or more, or lower-intensity exercise lasting several hours, a sports drink can help maintain energy levels and its salt will improve hydration. Choose drinks that contain sodium (salt) when exercise lasts longer than one hour, or in any event when large amounts of salt will be lost through your sweat.





How do I stay motivated?

Make sure your exercise regime includes activities that you like doing rather than what someone else tells you to do. Exercise with a friend or friends so that you can all keep each other motivated. Set new challenges to keep yourself stimulated, and keep going. It's always hard at first, even for elite athletes, but it does get easier!

What counts as moderate-intensity aerobic activity?

Examples of activities that require moderate effort for most people include:

- walking fast
- water aerobics
- cycling (level ground/few hills)
- doubles tennis
- mowing lawn
- hiking
- skateboarding
- roller-blading
- volleyball
- basketball

Moderate-intensity activity will raise your heart rate & make you breathe faster and feel warmer. One way to tell if you're working at a moderate intensity is if you can still talk, but you can't sing the words to a song.

What counts as vigorous-intensity activity?

There is substantial evidence that vigorous-intensity activity can bring health benefits over and above that of moderate intensity activity.

Examples of activities that require vigorous effort for most people include:

- jogging or running
- swimming fast
- cycling fast or on hills
- singles tennis
- football
- rugby
- skipping rope
- hockey
- aerobics
- gymnastics
- martial arts

Vigorous-intensity activity means you're breathing hard & fast, & your heart rate has gone up quite a bit. If you're working at this level, you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. In general, 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity can give similar health benefits to 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity.

Warm-Up Routine



Marching on the spot - 3 minutes

March on the spot and then march forwards and backwards. Pump your arms up and down in rhythm with your steps, keeping the elbows bent and the fists soft.



Heel Digs - 60 in 60 seconds

Place alternate heels to the front, keeping the front foot pointing up, and punch out with each heel dig. Keep a slight bend in the supporting leg.



Knee Lifts - 30 in 30 seconds

Stand tall, bring up alternate knees to touch the opposite hand. Keep your abs tight and back straight. Keep a slight bend in the supporting leg.



Shoulder Rolls - 2 sets of 10 reps

Keep marching on the spot. Roll your shoulders forwards 5 times and backwards 5 times. Let your arms hang loose by your sides.



Knee Bends - 10 repetitions

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your hands stretched out. Lower yourself no more than 20cm by bending your knees. Come up and repeat.

Cool Down Stretches

Buttock Stretch - hold 10-15 sec

bring knees up to chest. Cross right leg over left thigh. Grasp back of left thigh with both hands. Pull left leg toward chest. Repeat with opposite leg.



Hamstring Stretch - hold 10-15 sec

Lie on your back and raise your right leg. Keeping your left leg bent with your foot on the floor, pull your right leg towards you keeping it straight. Don't hold at the knee level. Repeat with opposite leg.



Groin Stretch - hold 10-15 sec

Sit down with your back straight and bend your legs, putting the soles of your feet together. Holding on to your feet, try to lower your knees towards the floor.



Calf Stretch - hold 10-15 sec

Step your right leg forward, keeping it bent and lean forwards slightly. Keep your left leg straight and try to lower the left heel to the ground. Repeat with opposite leg.



Quads Stretch - hold 10-15 sec

Lie on right side. Grab top of left foot and gently pull heel towards left buttock to stretch the front of the thigh, keeping knees touching. Repeat on the other side.



What about footwear?

A good pair of training shoes that suit your foot type will reduce the risk of injury. They should be comfortable and not cause blisters. There are lots of different types of training shoe available, depending on the sport or exercise you intend to do so get advice from a specialist retailer who will assess your foot and find the right shoe for you.



Do I need a Health Check?

If you feel out of shape, or you're recovering from injury or worried about an existing condition, see your GP before you start a new exercise / fitness regime. If you've not been active for a while, you should build your fitness levels gradually and gently, to reduce the risk of injury or over-training.