



THE FACTS ABOUT EXERCISE

EXERCISING WELL

- Sedentary behaviour is associated with poorer mental health and evidence suggests that increased levels of exercise can positively impact on mood and general wellbeing.

AUSTRALIA'S PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR GUIDELINES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (13-17 YEAR OLDS)

Being active is important for everyone. Keeping physically active and limiting sedentary behaviour is not always a priority for young people, but it is important. These guidelines are for all young people, irrespective of cultural background, gender or ability.

Physical activity guidelines

- Children and young people should aim for at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day involving mainly aerobic activities that makes their heart beat faster - more is better.
- On at least three days per week young people should engage in activities that strengthen muscle and bone.
- To achieve additional health benefits young people should engage in more activity – up to several hours per day.

Sedentary behaviour guidelines

- To reduce health risks, young people aged 5 – 17 years should minimise the time they spend being sedentary every day.
- Limit use of electronic media for entertainment (e.g. television, seated electronic games and computer use) to no more than two hours a day – lower levels are associated with reduced health risks.
- Break up long periods of sitting as often as possible.

EXERCISE AND THE BRAIN

Regular exercise can increase levels of serotonin in the brain, a neurotransmitter involved in regulating mood, sleep, appetite and other functions.

Exercise can also increase the level of endorphins in the brain which have 'mood-lifting' properties.



REGULAR EXERCISE MAY IMPROVE SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION BY:

- Improving sleep
- Increasing levels of energy
- Distracting from worries and rumination
- Improving social connection and reducing loneliness if exercising with other people
- Increasing self-efficacy through taking positive action towards their own well-being

M T W T H F

THE EVIDENCE

The Black Dog Institute has identified several studies that reported on the benefits of exercise in managing depression. These studies have showed that:

- People who exercise regularly experience fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety than those who do not exercise regularly.
- Regular exercise of moderate intensity can be an effective adjunctive treatment by itself for both melancholic and non-melancholic depression.
- Sixteen weeks of regular exercise has been found to be equally effective as antidepressant medication in the treatment of mild to moderate depression.
- Both aerobic exercise (e.g. brisk walking, cycling or jogging) and resistance or strength training (e.g. weight-lifting) have been found to be helpful in treating depression.
- Exercise has positive short-term effects on self-esteem in children and young people..



The 'Make your move – Sit less - Be active for life!' brochure presents the guidelines and provides further information and advice about physical activity and sedentary behaviour (sitting) for young people.

This fact sheet has been adapted from the following sources:

- Australian Government, Department of Health, *Guidelines for healthy growth & development for children & young people (5 to 17 years)*, [https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/F01F92328EDAD58CA257BF0001E720D/\\$file/brochure_24hr_guidelines_5-17yrs.pdf](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/F01F92328EDAD58CA257BF0001E720D/$file/brochure_24hr_guidelines_5-17yrs.pdf)
- The Black Dog Institute, *Exercise and Depression Fact Sheet*, https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/docs/default-source/factsheets/exercise_depression.pdf?sfvrsn=8
- Parker et al., *The effectiveness of simple psychological and exercise interventions for high prevalence mental health problems in young people: a factorial randomised controlled trial*, *Trials* 2011, 12:76
- *headspace: Moving your way to a healthy headspace* Fact Sheet, <https://headspace.org.au/young-people/moving-your-way-to-a-healthy-headspace/?stage=Live>
- Eirland E, Hagen K, Abbott J, Nordheim L, *Exercise to improve self-esteem in children and young people*. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2004, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD003663. DOI: 10.1002/14651838.CD003663.pub2.