



B4 - Develop strength & fitness through movement.

B5 - Improve balance & co-ordination

The Benefits of Cardiovascular Exercise

Cardiovascular exercise is any activity which makes your heart beat faster. The good news is you don't have to be gasping for breath in order to improve your cardio-vascular fitness. Any activity which makes you feel slightly warm, makes your heart beat slightly faster, and your breathing slightly deeper will be beneficial. Of course if you suddenly do a lot more activity than you have been used to you are likely to irritate grumpy tissues and trigger a flare-up, the key is to look for opportunities throughout the day to fit in small amounts of cardio-vascular activity (little and often). You might decide to do a few step-ups at the bottom of the stairs every time you pass, you might abandon the remote control for an evening and get up to change channel, or park the car a bit further away when shopping. Whatever it is, it has to be right for you and fit easily with your lifestyle, over time you can then make gradual increases.

The benefits of exercise - from preventing chronic health conditions to boosting confidence and self-esteem - are hard to ignore, and increasing cardiovascular fitness has been proven to be a very important tool in the management of chronic pain.

Here are some of the ways cardiovascular exercise helps:

1. Exercise improves your mood.

Exercise stimulates the production of various brain chemicals, which may leave you feeling happier and more relaxed than you were before exercised. You'll also look better and feel better when you exercise regularly, which can boost your confidence and improve your self-esteem.

Exercise can reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, and reduces the effects of stress on the body.

2. Exercise closes the Pain Gate

Gentle activity has an effect to directly close the pain gate and make you feel more comfortable. Improved circulation to the tissues makes them more tolerant and carries away chemical irritants. Exercise stimulates the production of endorphins in the brain (your natural pain killing chemicals).

3. Exercise promotes better sleep.

A good night's sleep can improve your concentration, productivity and mood. Exercise can be the key to better sleep. Regular exercise can help you fall asleep faster and deepen your sleep. The timing is up to you — but if you're having trouble sleeping, you might want to try late afternoon exercise sessions. The natural dip in body temperature five to six hours after you exercise might help you fall asleep.

4. Exercise strengthens your heart and lungs, and improves your general health.

Exercise delivers oxygen and nutrients to your tissues. In fact, regular exercise helps your entire cardiovascular system — the circulation of blood through your heart and blood vessels — work more efficiently. When your heart and lungs work more efficiently, you have more energy to do the things you enjoy. Exercise keeps you fit, improves your strength, stamina and range of movement.



5. Exercise can be fun!

Exercise doesn't have to be boring. Enjoy a walk in the countryside or by the sea, involve your family and friends. Find an activity you enjoy, if you get bored, try something new. If you're moving, it counts! Remember that the best exercise is the exercise that is done. You are much more likely to keep going with exercise if it is enjoyable!

6. Exercise combats illness.

Regular exercise can help you prevent — or manage — high blood pressure. Your cholesterol will benefit, too. Regular exercise boosts high-density lipoprotein (HDL), or "good," cholesterol while decreasing low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad," cholesterol. This lowers the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Regular exercise can help you prevent type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and certain types of cancer.

7. Exercise helps you manage your weight.

Exercise burns calories and helps you normalise your appetite. You don't even need to set aside major chunks of time for exercise. Take the stairs instead of the lift, walk during your lunch break, do 'sit to stands' during TV adverts.