

# HEALTH ACTION CAMPAIGN

because prevention is better than cure

## Being more physically active



*“I believe that if physical activity was a drug it would be classed as a wonder drug, which is why I would encourage everyone to get up and be active.”*

Professor Dame Sue Bailey, Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges

### Did you know?

Britain is an active nation. Research from Sport England shows that 6 in 10 adults are already getting the health benefits from doing more than 150 minutes of physical activity a week.

## **Find a personal motivation**

The NHS advises that people who exercise regularly have a lower risk of developing many long-term (chronic) conditions, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and some cancers. Research shows that physical activity can also boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing the risk of stress, depression and dementia.

## **Have a positive mind-set**

Get yourself some sportswear that makes you feel good about yourself. Researchers at the Northwestern University in Illinois, US, have found that by simply putting on exercise gear, you are more likely to get into the right frame of mind to start exercising, and it will make your workout more effective too

## **Set SMART goals and measure success**

According to the NHS, for any type of activity to benefit your health, you need to be moving quickly enough to raise your heart rate, breathe faster and feel warmer. Start as slowly as you need to – even walking counts as exercise. Try setting yourself daily step-count goals or aim to do a set number of exercise classes each month.

## **Find options that work for you**

Modern life offers all sorts of behaviour change options to help you get fit and move more - whether it's a fitness tracker that buzzes when you've been sedentary for too long, an app that lets you measure the distance of your run, or access to free at-home workout videos. A review of published research in 2015 concluded there was modest evidence that a number of apps to improve diet, physical activity and sedentary behaviour show promise for prompting both children and adults to change their behaviour.

## **You don't have to go it alone**

Exercising in groups can reduce stress levels. In a 12-week study, medical students in regular group fitness classes had a statistically significant decrease in perceived stress and an increase in physical, mental, and emotional quality of life compared with those exercising regularly alone or not engaging in regular exercise.

### Be flexible to stay on track

We all have good days and bad days, so exercise regularly but don't force yourself into strict routines unless that's what works for you. Exercise should be fun. If you've got a workout planned but you're not in the mood, try to do something rather than nothing. Even a 15-minute jog or workout is better than sitting on the sofa and you'll feel more motivated and energised for the next session. Try following a programme such as Matthew Robinson's free 12-week guide to getting fit, which teaches you techniques you can try anywhere.

### Case study

Sport was non-existent in Toni's world, according to *This girl can*. She was overweight and too embarrassed to get back into running. After discovering kickboxing, Toni says she has learnt so much about herself: "I can run, I am flexible, I can do the splits and boy can I punch. Nobody cared if I had extra lumps and bumps, nobody cared that it took me longer to do ten press-ups, nobody cared that I looked like a hot mess."

*Naomi Adams, December 2018*