Thrive with Five

Be Active

Issue Two

Suffolk user forum

Be active and feel good. Discover a physical activity you enjoy and make it part of everyday.

Welcome to Thrive with Five

Issue Two - Be Active

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People have been telling us about their worries and fears since our lives have changed due to the Coronavirus. Many of us have found that our usual coping outlets and networks have been disrupted or cancelled, leaving us feeling alone, worrying the future. Thrive with Five is a five-part series of self-help information based on Five Ways to Wellbeing. It helps us to focus on the small steps we can take each day, to build our self-care and emotional resilience, enabling us to cope better with life's challenges. We hope you enjoy Be Active and find these tips helpful – we are here to help support each other where we can. Stay safe and well.

Chloe

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Help us to help others!

Be part of our supportive community and send us your self-care ideas and inspiration for keeping healthy and well whilst social distancing and self-isolating. Help us to grow a valuable resource of information with tried and tested tips for self-care.

We love to hear about the things that are working for you. Send your inspiring self-care tips direct to our inbox.

Try to keep your ideas shorter than 60 words. Pictures or illustrations would be a lovely addition. We cannot promise to publish every contribution and we may have to edit some text at our discretion, but we do read all self-care tips with great interest. Together we can do so much.

Suffolk User Forum

@SUFMentalWealth

Thrive with Five

Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give

Thrive with Five and nourish the soul.

Suffolk User Forum is the voice for mental health service users in the East and West of Suffolk. We provide peer advocacy and support and gather people's experiences of mental health services. Our reports to influence decision makers, promoting coproduction to improve services to better meet people's needs. We also signpost people to services and promote self-care for improved mental health and wellbeing.

Thrive with Five is based on the Five Ways to Wellbeing, researched and developed by the New Economics Foundation. The five ways are Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give. They provide a framework that can help us think about the things that matter most to us.

They help us develop small changes that help us to feel stronger and healthier in mind, body, and spirit. We can use these wellbeing areas to support us, whatever our circumstances, age, or situation. Our Thrive with Five guides share proven tips on how we can incorporate self-care into everyday life.

Be Active is the second in this series. It is about building activity and exercise into our everyday life.

Being more active increases our sense of wellbeing. It helps to reduce stress and symptoms of mental health conditions like depression, anxiety and helps with recovery from mental health illness. We can be active in the way that suits our lives and routines.

Be Active

Looking after our physical & mental health

Feeling great

Being active is not only great for our physical health but for our mental health too. Activity releases chemicals called endorphins and serotonin that improve our mood.

Being more active every day, building in exercise, helps us all to reduce stress and symptoms of mental health conditions like depression, anxiety and helps with recovery from mental health issues.

Activity increases our sense of wellbeing. We feel more energetic throughout the day, sleep better at night, our memory improves, and we feel more relaxed and positive about ourselves and our lives.

Being active is not about believing we must commit to hours of fitness, exercise or be running miles running each week. It is about finding activities that we enjoy and make them a part of our life. Small achievable steps make the best start and it is never too late to begin to be more active. Join us and begin with at our top tips for getting started, see how easy it is to start to be active at home, and explore a wide range of online resources and activities.

There is something for us all. We can choose to be active in the way that most suits our lives and routines, whilst staying home and best of all – be active for free!

Be Active – Getting started

Top tips to Be Active

Having a plan

Be active safely

Those of us who have any health problems or if it has been a while since we have done any physical activity, should check with our GP or other health professional before starting a new exercise regime.

Make Time

Identify free times. Thinking about our daily routines start by identifying activity times either daily or weekly. We are starting small, so finding 10-minute slots two or three times a week is a helpful start, over the weeks we can increase these to five 30-minute slots.

By setting the time and days on our calendar or daily planner, with reminders, we can help ourselves stay on track with our goals. We can also add more physical activity to our daily routine, with activities that require little time.

Be active with others

Asking our friends and family to support us can be helpful, especially if we are in a busy family and finding time and space at home is limited, because everyone is home! Family support can help us to find the time we need – whatever works best for us.

Energizing

Planning to be active at times in the day or week when we have more energy will help us feel more like being active.

We may sometimes need to convince ourselves to give it a chance, as the weeks pass, we will see that physical activity is increasing our energy levels. So, even when we do not feel like it – we can choose to set a small target and 'just do it!'.

The fact we have stuck to our plan will itself help us to feel good about ourselves. It is a good feeling to tick off our successes and remind ourselves how well we are doing.

Being Motivated

Plan several weeks activity sessions at a time, so it is built into every day. Make physical activity a regular part of our family's schedule. Write it on a family activity calendar. There is much debate about how long it takes to create a new habit but planning for 3 to 4 weeks at time sets out the intention to be more active, and gives the opportunity to start small, achieve being active in bite size steps. Find an online exercise session that is at the right level, and enjoyable. Get the children doing Joe Wicks and join in with them!

Pick activities requiring no new skills, such as lifting tin cans instead of dumbbells, walking around the garden, or climbing stairs.

Exercise with friends who are at the same skill level, create a session together on Zoom or other virtual video calls.

Coping with bad days

We naturally compare ourselves to others, often unfavourably, and this is easier than ever with the internet, social media, and reality TV.

We can get discouraged, feeling we can never achieve our goals and give up on our plans and best intentions. But a lapse does not mean complete failure. This is the time to look back to see how far we have come and to move forward.

By noticing how we are feeling, we can turn these thoughts into helpful plans so we can start again, and day by day move towards what we want for ourselves, for our bodies and our health.

Avoiding injury

As we get more active and begin to do more exercise it is important to learn how to warm up and cool down to prevent injury. The NHS Live Well website has some helpful examples of warm up routines. Find out more on this link: www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/how-to-warm-up-before-exercising

You can also find lots of warm up routines on Youtube. Learn how to exercise correctly for our age, fitness level, skill level, and health status. Being active is for everyone and there are lots of top tips and helpful information for us all at any age, health, and fitness level in Be Active, find the section that best suits our own body. Start with activities that feel comfortable for you and gradually build up the amount of time and physical activity. Warm up and cool down.

Focus on our achievements

Download an app that records your achievements and progress day by day. There are plenty of fitness app on the app stores, ones that measure steps as we walk for example, from couch to 5k; plus smart watches. As we start out it can be very rewarding to see just how many steps, we walk just about our homes each day. Or we can keep a diary and at the end of the day tick off our achievements, helping us to feel good and start the next day, feeling more positive about our successes. We can join online chat forums such as the Active 10 Health Unlocked social network.
www.nhs.uk/oneyou/active10/home

Use Available Resources

We can choose simple activities that do not need costly sports gear, such as walking, jogging, jumping rope, or doing push-ups. Tin cans or water bottles can become weights, to help build upper arm strength.

Build New Skills

Finding out what our friends are doing to be active, can help us not only be connected but provides an opportunity to learn new skills, share tips and ideas.
We can have a joint plan and check in with each other to keep our motivation going or try out new be active ideas, You Tube videos etc.

Be inspired

Finding motivation is the key to success. Find inspiration on the Keep Moving Suffolk website. They have nine fantastic resources that are packed with free resources including walking and cycling routes, exercise cards, historic walks and love to ride.

In all weathers

By developing a range of activities, we can always succeed in our goals regardless of the season; or plan our walk whatever the weather!

Visit the Keep Moving Suffolk Website for inspiration
www.keepmovingsuffolk.com

Be Active - Fact or fiction?

Myth busting

Pain is our body's alarm system

Being physically active is good for us, but there are also lots of misinformation about when, where and how we should be exercising. The British Heart Foundation www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/heart-matters-magazine/activity/fitness-myths reveals the myths, facts and fiction about being more active.

Sweating a lot proves that we are working harder

Sweat is our body's way of helping us cool down when we are overheating. It is a natural physical process. It does not necessarily prove how hard we are working. If we are fit, or used to doing a specific activity, we may not sweat as much.

No pain, no gain

Pain is our body's alarm system, which signals when we are about to harm ourselves and that we need to do something differently. If we are in pain, we should stop the exercise that we are doing. Resting is important to let our body's recover from exercise.

We need to try to have at least one or two days a week where we can relax and rest. This does not mean we need to stay at home with our feet up, as we could always do some gentle yoga or walking, but it is important to keep our bodies in balance, and not to push ourselves too hard or injure ourselves.

If we have discomfort after exercise (e.g. sore muscles), this is known as delayed onset muscle soreness. www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/pain-after-exercise

This is fairly common when anyone starts a new exercise programme, change routine, or increases the duration or intensity of a regular workout.

Try a hot bath, stretching well after your exercise session, or a massage.

If it lasts more than a few days check with the NHS online, or 111.

Find information on common mistakes at Live Well: www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/top-10-gym-exercises-done-incorrectly

This website also contains information for exercising with back pain and tips for improving our posture:

- Exercising for back pain www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/?tabname=exercise-tips
- Back pain tips and posture www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/common-posture-mistakes-and-fixes

There is no point in exercising unless you can do it for 45 minutes or more

With exercise, every little helps. We do not need to do a 45-minute block of exercise if doing three 10 or 15-minute bursts is a start for us.

Being physically active is about starting small, and gradually increasing time, speed, or distance. Making a start so that 'be active' is part of our daily routine.

The best time to exercise is the morning

There is no reliable evidence to suggest that calories are burned more efficiently at certain times of day. Some of us prefer mornings, as they may be tired in the evening and others of us find that intense exercise before we go to bed makes it easier to fall asleep.

The most important thing is that we find a time that suits us, and our routines so that we are more likely to stick to it, and physical activity is more likely to become part of our everyday life.

We can eat whatever we want when exercising

The British Heart Foundation say there is some truth in the saying "You can't outrun a bad diet". Regular exercise will burn calories but does not get rid of the impact that regularly eating foods high in salt and saturated fat can do to our health.

If we are trying to lose weight then it's important for us to make changes to both our diet and level of physical activity. It is all about balance, and this includes having the food we enjoy every so often.

To be healthy and active we need to try to eat a balanced diet, including lots of vegetables and wholegrains. This will help to give us the nutrients for our 'be active' programme and exercise routine.

We can find out more about developing a more healthy diet with the Eat Well Guide www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eat-well-guide. Remember to drink fluids – aim to drink 6-8 glasses of water a day!

Be Active - Live Well

NHS Advice, tips and tools for healthy activity

Living well at any age – it is for us all!

The NHS website called Live Well www.nhs.uk/live-well contains lots of information on the ways we can all be more active. With advice, tips, useful tools and website links we can all to be more active, whatever our individual circumstances.

We believe it is important to focus on doing some activity every day, as any activity is good for us. It is helpful to make a start, however small, but there is lots of potential as we grow our successes to build in more active times each day and across our week. Explore a range of activities that can help our bodies to be stronger, more flexible, and healthier.

Strengthening activities

These work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms). It is recommended we do these at least 2 days a week

Moderate intensity activity

It is recommended we do moderate intensity exercise for 150 minutes each week.

Vigorous intensity activity

It is recommended we do 75 minutes each week. In our planning and goal setting we can begin to build a mix of different activities starting with those that we enjoy.

Strengthening our muscles

To get health benefits from strength exercises, we need to do them to the point where we need a short rest before repeating the activity. Here are some examples we can begin to try.

Day to day - carrying heavy shopping bags, lifting and carrying children, wheeling a wheelchair, heavy gardening, such as digging and shovelling.

- doing exercises that use our own body weight, such as push-ups and sit-ups, lifting weights or working with resistance bands, skipping.
- Activities that focus on strength, flexibility and breathing to boost physical and mental wellbeing such as Yoga, Pilates or Tai Chi.

Getting aerobic with Be Active

Moderate activity raises our heart rate and make us breathe faster and our bodies feel warmer. One way to test our whether we are working at moderate activities levels is that we can 'still talk, but not sing.' Examples of moderate intensity activities:

- brisk walking
- riding a bike
- dancing
- pushing a lawn mower
- hiking
- rollerblading
- walking the dog
- cycling on the level or on a few gentle hill

Getting vigorous with Be Active

Vigorous intensity activity makes us breathe hard and fast. If we are working at this level, we will not be able to say more than a few words without pausing for breath.

In general, 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity can give similar health benefits to 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity. Examples to try:

- jogging or running
- swimming fast
- riding a bike fast or on hills
- walking up the stairs
- sports, like football, rugby, netball and hockey
- skipping rope
- aerobics
- gymnastics
- martial arts

Very vigorous activities are exercises performed in short bursts of maximum effort broken up with rest.

This type of exercise is also known as High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT). Examples of very vigorous activities:

- lifting heavy weights
- circuit training
- sprinting up hills
- interval running
- running up stairs
- spinning classes

Be Active - New beginnings

Starting out and being more active

Working out from our chairs

Starting with making small changes and building light activity into everyday life, is a great way to begin to get more active.
It is important to break up long periods of sitting down. Make a start by planning to get up once an hour and stretching our legs a little. Even if this is just walking to the kitchen to put the kettle on, or doing the washing up, it all helps.

Easy home exercises to try to include are some gentle stretching, as this is a great way to keep supple, and doing it daily can also help improve flexibility and balance. We can even do it sitting or lying down.

Being active does not always have to come in the form of structured exercise, there are lots of other ways to remain active.

Housework

Housework is a great way to be physically active. Plan a good tidy up and "de-clutter". Research shows that living in a cluttered environment has a negative impact on our wellbeing. Having a good clean out can really lift our mood. Start off small with a kitchen cupboard or wardrobe, moving on to larger arears. Decluttering improves our wellbeing, and give us a physical workout, reducing stress levels and improves our sleep.

Ways to start moving more

• Getting up to make a cup of tea.

• Standing longer when making a meal.

• Walking around our home or garden, (if we have one).

• Cleaning out a cupboard. Cleaning windows or vacuuming.

• Making the bed. Climbing stairs.

• Reaching and dusting those high and low places.

• Doing activities such as raising our knees when waiting for the kettle to boil, or walking on the spot

• If we have a garden, cutting the lawn or weeding or planting seeds.

Gardening

Cutting the grass, planting some flowers or vegetables. This stimulates our mind as well as our bodies. We can enjoy watching the flowers bloom or vegetables grow.

Chair based exercises

Sitting does not necessarily mean being inactive. There are quite a few exercises we can do from a sitting position.
Choose a chair that is stable, solid and does not have wheels. We should be able to sit with our feet flat on the floor and knees bent at right angles. Find out more about Chair based exercises with Live Well: www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises

Walking our way to health

Walking is a great way to improve and maintain our overall health. A daily brisk walk can make you feel better in so many ways. It can boost your energy, clear your head, and lift your mood. It can help with many health issues, such as lower back pain and those at risk of high blood pressure.

Walking for just 10 minutes a day counts as exercise. It is free and a good way to start! As we get more active, we can begin to build more walking into our daily routine, perhaps using a step counter app, setting ourselves targets, firstly as we walk about our home and then going out for longer walks, in line with COVID-19 guidelines. It is amazing how many steps we can do, just walking around our homes and doing housework or jobs.

Physically, 30 minutes every day can increase cardiovascular fitness, strengthen bones, maintain a healthy weight, and boost muscle power.

Explore step counters and fitness apps on Google Play and Apple App Store. Download the NHS Active 10 App and take steps to move more.

Be Active for mental health

Boosting wellbeing

Make a start and declutter

Experts often say that exercise helps cure depression, but for many of us living with mental health problems such as depression, regular exercise can feel one of the most difficult challenges, when it feels like a major hurdle just to get out of bed.

Starting an exercise programme can be asking a lot of us. Jamie Wiebe in her article on starting exercising with depression (www.talkspace.com/blog/start-exercising-with-depression-tips) says "Stay in the sheets? Why not, if the alternative is running 10 miles." However, she makes it clear that we can make a start, with small accomplishments to build good feelings and new routines.

When we are depressed our self-talk can make anything, we try to do a failure, and we can talk ourselves out of our recovery intentions and plans. Instead of focusing on beginning a whole new regime, we need to start small; getting up, showered and dressed each day may at first be a good start. This can be increased by clearing out a cupboard, decluttering that pile of papers or our wardrobe.

All of these are a good start to being active and beginning to build on successes. Beginning to be active can often kickstart our mood, and we can end up feeling better simply because we made a start, even when we did not feel like it.

Be Active - Health conditions

Living with long term physical health conditions

Building and maintaining good health and wellbeing

Starting to become more active can be daunting, especially if when we have not done much exercise before and are living with a long-term health condition.

However, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy say that everyone can be active, no matter their age or physical condition. They emphasise that getting active is completely free, and something we all have the power to start doing more of at any point in our lives.

On their website they provide top tips for a wide range of long-term conditions that can help us all become more active.

By beginning to build regular activity, that suits our body's needs, into everyday life. They provide information for a range of long-term health conditions.

Areas covered include:
Being active with bladder and bowel issues. Being active with Arthritis, Bladder and bowel problems cancer, chronic pain, dementia, diabetes, heart disease, respiratory conditions, after a stroke, living with cancer, Parkinson's Disease, Multiple sclerosis and HIV.

Visit their website to find out more:
www.csp.org.uk/conditions

Be Active with disabilities

Expert tips

Be Active with chair workouts

When we have limited mobility, keeping fit and active can feel more difficult. It can sometimes feel like a challenge to know how to start a get active regime, especially with a physical disability. Many may struggle to transfer from a chair to bed. Working within our physical body's abilities, we can stretch our minds to begin to use daily activities as our 'be active' work out.

Dom Thorpe, a personal trainer with Disability Training (www.dt-training.co.uk) which specialises in online training and coaching for people with chronic conditions and disabilities says: "..turn daily activities into an exercise. Instead of simply doing it as a means to an end, do it five times every time you do it".

With regular practice, we will find it easier, and our strength will improve.
He recommends making the most of things around the house like a wheelchair or support rails – all of which can be used for pushing and pulling which will work the upper body. There are also other helpful websites with simple expert tips on how to improve fitness if we live with physical disabilities.

- www.makesportfun.com/activebucks-covid19/disabilities
- www.weareundefeatable.co.uk/ways-to-move/get-moving-around-the-home
- www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises
- www.paradance.org.uk

Be Active for older people

Staying active at any age

Get moving with housework

Age UK say that we are always told being active is the secret ingredient to health and happiness, and it can help us reduce the risk of everything from cancer to heart disease. But for some of us, just walking up the stairs is hard.

They say, "However you're feeling right now, and whatever you're dealing with, we can help you get moving more so you'll feel better for longer."

It can be hard to know what sorts of exercises are safe to try at home. Starting an exercise routine can feel a little intimidating at first, but it does not have to be complicated.

There are simple routines we can try. And the good news is that many things you do every day anyway count towards your physical activity levels, such as cooking, housework, or gardening. If you do not have a computer, ask a relative or friend to download the Keep Moving Suffolk Exercise Cards or Live Well sitting exercises.

- www.keepmovingsuffolk.com/exercise-if-youre-older
- www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/exercise
- www.makesportfun.com/activebucks-covid19/olderadults
- www.nhs.uk/livewell/fitness/documents/NHS_sitting_exercise.pdf

Suffolk user forum

your voice for emotional and mental health

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