



Exercise! Great for the Body and Mind

We know exercise is good for your body, but just as importantly, it's good for your mental health with many studies showing that improving your physical health also improves your mental health.

Little or no physical exercise can increase the risk of depression, and a poor diet can decrease your sense of wellbeing, so regular exercise and physical activity should be part of any mental healthcare.

There is a good reason why exercise is recommended for improving mood. It's those endorphins; the chemicals our body releases when we get moving that contribute to a feeling of wellness post exercise. But it doesn't stop with a post workout good mood. Exercise improves your alertness, makes everyday movement easier and improves sleep.

Any amount of exercise is better than none, and for those who are currently sedentary, the gains will be felt with even small additions in physical activity.

Health experts recommend 30 minutes or more at least three times a week, remembering that it is longer term adherence to exercise that is more important than how long you move in a single session.

Physical activity challenges both the mind as well as the body, as learning new skills increases brain activity. This means that instead of fearing a new gym exercise, or worrying about feeling uncoordinated in a group exercise/aerobics class, these activities should be embraced. Even better news is that exercising in a social setting will also contribute to an improvement in mood through having interaction and hopefully fun with others.

It's often hard to get motivated to exercise and be active when you are feeling low, but the benefits far outweigh the effort.

Take these steps to make getting active easier:

- Exercise with a friend
- Try a group exercise class. You can disappear into the group and share the energy of those around you.
- Talk to an NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) Registered Exercise Professional who will be able to give you the right advice about how to add exercise into your life.
- Plan ahead and set up a routine so you know what you are going to do each day, even if it's just a walk around the block.
- Start gradually and build up as you start to feel the benefits on your mood and physical activity and fitness levels.
- Do activities you enjoy. There are so many exercise options which means you will be able to find one that suits you regardless of age, or current level of physical activity.

If you are looking to explore using exercise to improve your mental health and well being, our advice is to make sure you use only a REPs registered exercise professional. They have the relevant education and experience to keep you safe, and will be able to give you the encouragement to keep you going.

You can find a REPs Registered Exercise Facility or professional in your area online at www.reps.org.nz

References:

<http://www.neurological.org.nz/brain-health/stay-active>

Contact Details:

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Who is the NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)?

REPs is an independent non profit organisation administrating the New Zealand exercise professionals register to ensure that the public receive safe and effective exercise advice.

Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the “Warrant of Fitness Check” that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

