

EXERCISE FOR YOUNG WOMEN

Regular physical activity is important for health throughout a person's life. Physical activity benefits physical, social, and mental health. This is important for helping to move through issues during the adolescent years.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING ACTIVE?

- Having fun interacting with friends and family
- Building self-esteem and contributing to psychological wellbeing
- Helping maintain a healthy body weight
- Making muscles and bones stronger
- Improving cardiovascular and aerobic fitness
- Improving heart health
- Developing healthy habits that can be carried into adulthood
- Regular physical activity is associated with better academic achievement

WHAT SHOULD YOU EAT?

Eating a balanced and healthy diet is extremely important. Daily food intake should include foods from each of the five major food groups e.g. milk, cheese, yoghurt and iron-rich foods, red meat, chicken, seafood, green leafy vegetables in their diet. It is also important to drink plenty of water.



Vegetarians

Vegetarians need to eat foods high in protein and iron including wholegrain breads and cereals, spinach, legumes, dried apricots, nuts and seeds.

HOW MUCH ACTIVITY SHOULD YOU DO?

Some young women like to exercise in groups while others prefer to exercise alone. The hardest part is firstly about starting and then about continuing exercise. A good idea is to find a 'health buddy' that has similar goals or someone who can help you stay on track and provide you with motivation i.e. sibling, parents, friends. Young women should do at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day. If you are starting to exercise for the first time, you might want to start walking for 10-15 minutes at a time i.e. to school or to a friend's house. Some activity is better than none however greater health benefits are gained the more activity you do.

Activities of moderate to vigorous intensity include:

- Brisk walking
- Hiking
- Bike riding
- Skateboarding
- Dancing
- Running
- Football
- Netball
- Soccer
- Swimming

TIP

Any exercise that is considered 'weight bearing' is great for your bone health. Non-weight bearing exercises, while still beneficial, will only improve your aerobic health.

TIP

Limit TV and computer leisure activity to less than two hours per day. Try to break up the amount of sitting you do as much as possible.

Practical tips for exercise

- Start gradually
- Warm up and stretch
- Stay hydrated
- Don't exercise in the heat of the day
- Wear footwear that is comfortable and appropriate for the type of exercise



Body image

- Many adolescents feel unhappy with their body weight and how they look during adolescence
- Many teenagers have incorrect views of what they think they should weigh and how they should look. Often unrealistic and unattainable images and representations in the media are to blame
- Women come in different body shapes and sizes, you do not need to be a size 8 to be healthy

MAINTAINING A HEALTHY BODY IMAGE

TIP

Try to accept everyone is different. Learn to like your body, no matter what size or shape.

TIP

Understand only a few women are supermodels or look like models in magazines. It is not only unhealthy but impossible to look like this due to image 'airbrushing'.

TIP

Focus on other achievements i.e. at school or in sport, or the ability to develop and maintain friendships, rather than how your body looks.

TIP

Set fitness goals not body shape goals. i.e. Can you increase the number of push-ups you can do? How long can you run for?



ARE YOU INVOLVED IN HIGH LEVEL SPORTS TRAINING?

It is important that adolescent girls participating in intense training are well supervised and eat a well-balanced diet that provides enough energy and nutrients essential for growth, maturation and training. Girls should consult a doctor if they are 16 years or older and have not had their first menstrual cycle or have not had a menstrual cycle in a three month period.

FEMALE ATHLETE TRIAD AND BONE STRENGTH

The Female Athlete Triad refers to the unhealthy results of having three conditions: poor nutrition, low bone density and having irregular, unusual or non-existing periods. Not eating enough or eating foods that do not provide adequate nutrition for exercise can cause your bones to become brittle over time (poor bone health) or can create dangerous changes in your menstrual cycle. If you notice these changes or know somebody that is exercising but not eating well or having irregular periods, talk to them, or get support from a teacher, parent or coach.

DEALING WITH MOOD CHANGES

TIP Be active. Research shows this helps prevent depression and anxiety.

TIP Learn to recognise mood swings and understand that these feelings won't last forever.

TIP Feel stressed or sad? Talk to somebody about your problems. If this feeling lasts for more than two weeks, talk to a doctor or counsellor.

TIP Listen to music, watch a movie, try yoga or a relaxation class.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Sports Medicine Australia

www.sma.org.au • www.smartplay.com.au
03 9674 8777

Australia's Physical Activity & Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Young People (13 -17 year olds)

www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/health-pubhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines#apa1317

Sports Dietitians Australia

www.sportsdietitians.com.au

References

For a full list of references, contact Sports Medicine Australia.

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