**Physical activity is one of the best things you can do to improve your health**

Getting at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week/ 30 mins a day over 5 days can put you at a lower risk of disease. Regular physical activity can also lower blood pressure and improve cholesterol levels.

**Benefits of physical activity:**

**Better mood**

Getting physically active can immediately reduce feelings of anxiety and help you sleep better. Over the long-term, it can help reduce the risk of depression. Regular walking, for example, can improve your mood, and participating in walking groups can help you remain socially connected to your neighbours, colleagues and friends.

**Better brain function**

Regular physical activity can keep your thinking, learning, and judgment skills sharp and delay the decline of these skills as you age

**Mental Health**

Physical activity helps you feel less tension, stress and mental fatigue.

It can also provide you with:

* A natural energy boost
* A sense of achievement
* Gives you better focus and motivation
* Help you to feel less angry or frustrated
* Can distract you from any negative thoughts/worries
* Can help build a healthy appetite
* Improves your quality of life
* Can reduce loneliness (if exercising with a friend/ just getting out amongst others)
* Can help you sleep better
* Can reduce skeletal muscle tension

**Lower risk of heart disease and stroke**

Being regularly active at a moderate intensity level can help lower risk of heart disease and stroke. Regular physical activity can also lower your blood pressure and improve your cholesterol levels

**Lower risk of type 2 diabetes or diabetes complications**

It is estimated that more than 5.6 million people in the UK are living with diabetes. Risk factors of type 2 diabetes include age, family history and ethnicity, as well as living with overweight or obesity. Factors such as income, education, housing, access to healthy food, as well as poorer access to healthcare, have been shown to be strongly linked to an increased risk of developing several health conditions – including obesity and type 2 diabetes. *(Diabetes.org.uk)*

Eating healthy foods, making physical activity part of your daily routine and staying at a healthy weight can help bring your blood sugar level back to normal.

**Lower risk of some cancers**

There is strong evidence that getting enough physical activity is linked to a lower risk of many types of cancer in both men and women. ‘’Exercising regularly can lower the risk of breast cancer and bowel cancer in particular’’ *(Cancer Research UK)*. It’s thought that exercise lowers cancer risk in a number of ways, firstly, by helping to lower BMI, but also through the modulation of hormones, inflammation, the immune system, digestion and metabolism.

**Stronger bones and muscles**

Doing aerobic, muscle-strengthening and bone-strengthening physical activities of at least moderate intensity can slow the loss of bone density. Being physically active can also help with arthritis pain and reduce the risk of hip fractures.