

Exercise for depression

Being depressed can leave you feeling low in energy, which might put you off being more active.

Regular exercise can boost your mood if you have depression, and it's especially useful for people with mild to moderate depression.

"Any type of exercise is useful, as long as it suits you and you do enough of it," says Dr Alan Cohen, a GP with a special interest in mental health.

"Exercise should be something you enjoy; otherwise, it will be hard to find the motivation to do it regularly."

How often do you need to exercise?

To stay healthy, adults should do 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity every week.

If you have not exercised for a while, start gradually and aim to build up towards achieving 150 minutes a week.

Any exercise is better than none. Even a brisk 10-minute walk can clear your mind and help you relax.

How to get started with exercise

Find an activity you can do regularly. You can take part in a team sport, attend classes at a leisure centre, or just be more active in your daily routine by walking or cycling instead of travelling by car or public transport.

If you like walking, visit the [Walking for Health website](#) to find a walking group near you. Walking for Health groups can support people who have health problems, including mental health conditions.

Exercise on prescription

If you have not exercised for a long time or are concerned about the effects of exercise on your body or health, ask a GP about exercise on prescription.

Lots of GP surgeries across the country prescribe exercise as a treatment for a range of conditions, including depression.

The [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#) recommends that people with mild to moderate depression take part in about 3 sessions a week, lasting about 45 minutes to 1 hour, over 10 to 14 weeks.

The GP can help you decide what type of activity will suit you. Depending on your circumstances and what's available locally, the exercise programme may be offered free or at a reduced cost.

Other help for depression

Many treatments are available for depression, including [talking therapies](#), [antidepressants](#) and [self-help](#) of various kinds.

[Find out more about treatment for depression](#)

If you have been feeling down for more than 2 weeks, see a GP to discuss your symptoms.

They can tell you about the choice of treatment available for depression and help you decide what's best for you.