



GET ACTIVE

www.samh.org.uk

SAMH is Scotland's leading mental health charity and is dedicated to mental health and wellbeing for all



Get Active

Sport and Physical Activity are Good for Your Mental Health

We often talk about the mind and body as though they are completely separate – but they are not. Your mind can't function unless your body is working properly, and the state of your mind affects your body

The benefits of physical activity for physical health are widely known, and recently we've learned more about how exercise can help to promote mental health and help people with mental health problems.

Whatever activities you may choose to do, there is increasing evidence that physical activity can improve mental wellbeing and prevent mental health problems – so what are you waiting for?



What counts as being physically active?

Quadruple Olympic Champion Chris Hoy is an ambassador for SAMH - but you don't have to be an athlete to get active!

Physical activity can include:

- **sports**, such as football, golf, tennis, badminton, basketball or netball
- **leisure activities**, such as skateboarding, swimming, dancing, running and cycling
- **everyday activities**, such as cleaning, gardening, DIY and walking.

All of these activities can be carried out at different levels of intensity and it is best to gradually build up to the level of activity that you do.

Some people may enjoy vigorous exercise regimes, while others may want to be more active by walking to the shops instead of taking the bus. Whether it's as an amateur, club member or gold medalist, participating in sport will benefit your mental health. If you are a coach, or teacher, why not use sport to improve your teams' mental health and wellbeing?

National guidelines recommend that everyone gets at least half an hour of moderate exercise, most days of the week. You are more likely to remain physically active if you find an activity that you enjoy. It doesn't have to be hard – but try to do something every day. And remember, it's good for your mind as well as your body!

So what's stopping you?

If you've not been physically active in a while, you might be wondering how to get started. Sometimes taking the first step can be the hardest part. It is important to start at a comfortable level and look at physical activity as a fun part of daily life.

Common reasons people give for not being more active include a lack of time and money. However, you can control how much of your time you spend exercising and it doesn't have to cost a penny.

Most people are able to start being more active straight away. However, if you have any concerns or underlying health problems, talk to your GP before increasing your activity levels.

So what difference does it really make?

- Physical activity can help improve your mood, leave you better able to cope with negative feelings and bring you an overall sense of wellbeing.
- Physical activity can help in raising people's self-esteem and boosting self-confidence.
- Physical activity can give you more energy, improve the quality of your sleep and ease stress and tension.
- Taking part in sports and other activities can be a great way to meet new people and enjoy the company of others. Alternatively, you can enjoy activities alone and set time aside to focus on yourself.





How do we know it works?

Many people experiencing mental health problems report that physical activity plays an important role in improving their quality of life and symptom management. There is now increasing evidence to support this and research indicates that physical activity can even reduce the chances of someone developing a mental health problem.

- Physical activity has been shown to be an effective treatment for clinical depression, both in the short and long term.
- There is evidence to support the anxiety-reducing effect of physical activity. Physically active people report fewer symptoms of anxiety or emotional distress than those

who are inactive and even single exercise sessions can help individuals feel less anxious.

- Exercise may help alleviate some of the symptoms of more severe mental health problems, such as hallucinations.
- People with mental health problems are also at increased risk of a range of physical health problems, such as cardiovascular disease and obesity. Regular exercise reduces this risk.

Physical activity can be included as part of the overall treatment plan for a particular mental health problem, whatever it may be. GPs can often prescribe exercise sessions and activities as part of your care.

Further Information

SAMH

SAMH provides an information service every weekday between 2 - 4.30pm. The service offers information on issues related to mental health and mental health problems. You can phone the service on 0800 917 3466 or email info@samh.org.uk

For more information about the work of SAMH, or to become a SAMH member, contact us at: SAMH, Cumbrae House, 15 Carlton Court, Glasgow, Scotland, G5 9JP.
Tel: 0141 568 7000
Email: enquire@samh.org.uk
Website: www.samh.org.uk

Active Scotland

Looking for ways to get active, but not sure where to start? Active Scotland is a web based resource which can help. If you put your postcode or town in their on-line search box then they will find activities close to home.
Just go to: www.activescotland.org.uk

Sportscotland

Sportscotland is the national agency for sport, dedicated to helping increase participation and improve performances in Scottish sport.

Sportscotland, Doges, Templeton on the Green, 62 Templeton Street, Glasgow, G40 1DA
Tel: 0141 534 6500
Fax: 0141 534 6501
Email: sportscotland.enquiries@sportscotland.org.uk
www.sportscotland.org.uk

GPs

As well as medical advice and treatment, GPs can often prescribe exercise sessions and activities as part of your care. Contact your GP to find out more.

NHS 24

NHS 24 is the telephone health advice and information service for Scotland
NHS 24 Central Office, Caledonia House, Fifty Pitches Road, Cardonald Park, Glasgow, G51 4ED
Tel: 08454 242 424

Well? on the web

'Well?' on the web communicates the work of the Scottish Executive's National Programme for Improving the Mental Health and Well-Being of Scotland's Population.
Just go to:
www.wellscotland.info/index.html

Breathing Space

A free, confidential phone-line which anyone can call when feeling down or stressed.
Tel: 0800 83 85 87

SAMH is a company limited by guarantee registered in Scotland No. 82340

Scottish Charity No. SC-008897

Registered office: Cumbrae House, 15 Carlton Court, Glasgow, G5 9JP
We are often able to make our publications available in alternative formats.
Please contact us for further information.