

**The physical benefits of exercise** are well documented; however there are also a number of social benefits which can be gained from an active lifestyle.

Exercise does not necessarily have to mean competitive sport or an intense gym session but can be as simple as a walk on a Sunday afternoon or a fun dance class with friends.

### What are the social benefits of exercise?

For many people exercise can act as a welcome relief from busy or stressful schedule and so can be a significant factor in helping individuals stay positive and motivated. The science behind this is that Exercise can decrease 'stress hormones' like cortisol, and increase endorphins, your body's 'feel-good' chemicals, giving your mood a natural boost, however for many people the benefits are gained as much from the process of exercising, which can involve meeting up with new people or keeping in touch with family and friends.

The vast variety of forms of exercise can provide a spectrum of social benefits; from being part of a team, to leadership skills associated with team sports, to the personal confidence and personal wellbeing found in looking and feeling good.

Exercise is all inclusive and so can be an excellent way of socialising with people whom you would never ordinarily meet. By working together with people towards a common goal people can benefit from a sense of camaraderie.

### How can I get involved?

There are many activities you could take part in to increase your stamina. Not everyone sees exercise as fun and doing something you find boring, just because it's good for you, is very difficult to sustain. However, you can take steps to make it more enjoyable.

- Try out different sports or activities until you find something you like, such as a dance or aerobics class.
- Join a team or club where you could meet new friends, for example a local football team or a sport you haven't tried before.
- Activities that you can do as a family or with friends may help with motivation. When you find an activity you like, exercise at a pace that still allows you to talk.
- Try to go somewhere different and exercise outside such as in a forest, a beach or a park.
- Make sure you vary your activity so you don't get bored.



