



Getting Active

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You've had your transplant and your new organ is now working in sync with the rest of your body. Once you've consulted your medical team it is important to get your body active again.

Without regular exercise your muscles become weak and common tasks become more difficult to do. Loss of muscle strength affects balance, mobility and can interfere with social activities and hobbies. Fortunately, even incidental exercise like doing the housework or gardening can improve your physical condition and make you feel better!

How exercise can help you

There are many well-known benefits to exercise that apply just as well to people who've had a transplant as to the general population, including:

- Stronger muscles and bones
- Improved sleep
- Improved fitness
- Increased energy
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Lower blood pressure
- Better memory
- Improved mood
- Better quality of life
- Reduced risk of chronic conditions, and
- Better health generally.



Think about your mental health



Exercise is one of the most powerful ways to boost your mental health. It triggers the release of endorphins which reduce stress and anxiety and protect against depression. Exercise also improves your sleep quality, which plays an important role in mental health. Both aerobic and resistance training are associated with improved mental health outcomes.

Some research has shown that participation in team sports has the greatest correlation with good mental health through providing a sense of community and connection. You may choose to be part of a local sporting team, social walking group, or community swimming squad. Whatever interests you is what's important. Think about it as socialising as much as exercise!

What is the best exercise for me?

'Physical activity' is about moving your body. It is not structured or overly stressful, but it assists in keeping your body in good condition. Incidental activity such as gardening or housework count as physical activity and doing these things regularly can make you feel better.

'Exercise' is about a more structured training for your heart, lungs and especially leg muscles. You will need to become a little puffed, and to begin with your muscles may be a bit sore after exercise. We all need to do both physical activity and regular exercise.

Ideally, you should be aiming to meet weekly physical activity guidelines of 2.5 – 5hrs of moderately intense physical activity, or 1.25 – 2.5hrs of vigorous physical activity, or a combination of the two each week. Whilst this sounds like a lot of activity, keep in mind that this is the end goal, not where you should expect to be at the start of your journey.

The best exercise is one that someone will engage with regularly and stick with for the rest of their lives.

It is a good idea to mix the type of activities you take part in. To achieve the best outcomes, we recommend you participate in three different types of exercise:

1. Aerobic exercise such as walking, swimming or cycling. Aerobic exercise increases your heart rate by using the large muscle groups. These activities are beneficial for your heart, lungs and circulatory system.
2. Resistance training uses exercises such as lifting weights and yoga to improve your muscle strength and bone health. These activities should be done 2-3 times per week and will make everyday activities seem easier.
3. Flexibility and balance exercises including gentle stretches, static and dynamic poses will help improve your stability, mobility and range of motion, thereby reducing your risk of injury and falls.

All activity is beneficial!

Whilst there are many benefits to a structured exercise program, it is important to note that even incidental physical activity can make a big difference to your well-being. The key is to move more and sit less!

A little movement can make a big difference. Some tips to increase your incidental physical activity:

- If you're sitting for prolonged periods, spend 3 minutes of every 30 doing some light walking or resistance exercises.
- Don't just sit while you're watching TV – do some housework or resistance band exercises.
- Use your lunch break as an opportunity to move, socialise, get some fresh air.
- Walk and talk - take your phone calls on the move or consider walking meetings and catch-ups with friends rather than sitting for a drink or meal.
- Try incorporating squats or calf-raises whilst waiting – for the bus, the kettle, the kids!
- Set reminders to move every 30 minutes. Smart devices or paper notes work just as well.

