

ACTIVE PEOPLE

HEALTHY MINDS



 **sport**
Northern Ireland
LOTTERY FUNDED

The lead agency for developing sport in Northern Ireland

ACTIVE PEOPLE: HEALTHY MINDS

Sport Northern Ireland is keen to promote the message that sport and physical activity are for everyone and that the benefits of an active lifestyle should be fully embraced and enjoyed by all. One of sport's greatest contributions is its positive impact on public health, and in keeping minds healthy.



DID YOU KNOW?

At least one in five adults in Northern Ireland may suffer from some form of mental health disorder in any year.

One in four people in Northern Ireland are likely to experience depression.

Lifeline is the Northern Ireland crisis response helpline for people experiencing distress or despair. You can call **Lifeline** on 0800 808 8000, or textphone on 18001 0808 808 8000, or visit www.lifelinehelpline.info



WHY BE ACTIVE?

Being physically active is a key element of living a longer, healthier and happier life.

Keeping active can help you keep your body and mind healthy and provide you with valuable opportunities for socialising with friends and meeting new people.

While regular participation in sport and physical activity help reduce your risk of physical diseases such as obesity, coronary heart disease and stroke, being active can also promote good mental health by:

- **Improving your mood**
- **Enhancing your sense of well-being**
- **Reducing anxiety**
- **Combating negative emotions**
- **Improving self-esteem, body image and confidence**
- **Protecting against depression**

Not being active enough can also disturb your sleep patterns, lower your fertility, present orthopaedic problems, reduce your quality of life, and increase your risk of premature death.

Having a mental health disorder can also impact on your physical health, and being active can help prevent obesity and control weight, hypertension, diabetes and coronary heart disease.



HOW MUCH ACTIVITY SHOULD I DO?

As a minimum, take part in sport or moderate physical activity for **30 minutes, 5 days a week**, or preferably every day for good general health.

Increasing the intensity or the amount of time of your activity can have additional health benefits.

No matter what activity you choose, it can be done all at once, or divided into two or three parts during the day. Even 10 minutes of activity count toward your total.

Even some activity is better than none.

MAKE SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY A REGULAR PART OF YOUR DAY

Choose activities that you will enjoy and can do regularly. Fitting activity into a daily routine can be an easy way to get active.

Keep motivated by trying something different on alternate days - be active at least 5 days a week. Do at least 10 minutes activity at a time, and think about a longer activity on the weekend.

Activities which are particularly good for mental health include walking, cycling, yoga, and tai chi.



GETTING AND STAYING ACTIVE



AT HOME AND IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Join a sports club, or take an exercise class
- Join a walking group
- Recruit a partner for support and encouragement
- Get the whole family involved – enjoy an afternoon bike ride with your kids
- Walk and/or cycle more, and drive less
- Talk to your health professional about referral programmes



AT WORK

- Get off the bus or train one stop early and walk the rest of the way
- Cycle to work – or part of the way
- Replace a coffee break with a brisk 10-minute walk. Ask a friend to go with you
- Walk to talk instead of using the phone or email
- Take part in an exercise programme at work or a nearby gym
- Encourage and participate in sport and physical activity at work

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Good mental health means feeling positive about yourself, coping with everyday pressures and forming and maintaining stable, rewarding relationships.

Mental health should be a priority for everyone; no-one is immune to poor mental health. Mental health problems are health conditions that are characterised by alterations in thinking, mood or behaviour.

There are different types of mental health disorders. Some are common, such as depression, anxiety disorders and substance use disorders, and others less common, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

If you feel you can't cope, or are turning to alcohol or drugs to get by, you may have a problem you need help with. If you were feeling physically sick you would probably not hesitate to go and see your doctor, so don't be embarrassed about seeking help for a mental health problem.

WHAT WORKS?



MICHAEL'S STORY

Michael attends a mental health drop-in centre that runs training courses and a physical activity outreach project for members aged 16-90.

Recently the outreach project has offered members six weekly sessions of taster activities including archery, kayaking and organised walks which Michael participated in. Following these sessions, Michael joined a regular archery class at the centre with others who developed a passion for their new activity. Michael is also in the process of gaining a coaching qualification in archery so that he can help others take part at the centre.

Michael says:

“ I have enjoyed trying new activities, I feel much better and more relaxed. ”

ABOUT SPORT NORTHERN IRELAND

Sport Northern Ireland is the leading public body for the development of sport in Northern Ireland. Its corporate vision is:

“a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport which contributes to a peaceful, fair and prosperous society”.

The full report ‘**Active People: Healthy Communities**’ can be downloaded online at www.sportni.net

This document is available in other accessible formats on request, and online at www.sportni.net



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