



Staying active during COVID-19

Sources: Black Dog Institute, VicHealth

As the government's COVID-19 shutdowns drive people into their homes, many of us may find regular exercising slipping off our daily to-do lists. But exercise isn't just about being physically active (although that's important too); research from the Black Dog Institute has found that as little as an hour a week of exercise can be highly effective at fighting depression.

If you're a regular exerciser, you're probably familiar with the endorphin rush and subsequent improved mood you often experience after a workout. That's because exercise provides a wide range of mental health benefits, from building coping and resilience to distracting from negative thoughts and improving memory and sleep.

How exercise helps our body and mind:

- It releases chemicals in your brain, like serotonin and endorphins, which are great for your mood
- It can also lead to better sleep and give you more energy
- It also makes you feel like you achieved something
- Regular exercise can help reduce your risk of serious health issues, like type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke
- It also helps with weight management (and you tend to feel like eating a healthier diet when you're exercising regularly, too)
- And lastly, but definitely not least given the current situation, regular physical activity is great for your immune system.

Tips to getting started:

1. **Start Simple**

Increase your activity levels gradually. Begin with simple activities, such as walking, gardening or doing small household tasks. Take a short 10-minute walk around the block when you wake up in the morning, at lunchtime, and when you return from work.

2. **Do what is enjoyable**

Do activities you enjoy with family and friends. You can also use the links below to find options and group activities in your local area. Over time, these activities will become easier, more interesting, relaxing, and satisfying.

3. **Make a plan and stick to it**

Work out a regular routine for being active. Don't forget that every step counts and it is even better when stairs are involved!

Ideas to get you moving:

Head Outside

Even with COVID-19 restrictions in place, you're still permitted to leave your home to exercise.

- Head out for a run
- Do a circuit in the park
- Go for a bike ride or
- A gentle walk

Just make sure you stay mindful of social distancing guidelines when you encounter other people and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds as soon as you return indoors.

Exercising at Home

Workout online:

- On YouTube there are endless free exercise videos to try, regardless of your fitness level or the size of your living room. From yoga and strength workouts to Pilates, high intensity interval training (HIIT) and more.
- Virtual classes – many personal trainers, dance instructors and other qualified fitness professionals are moving their classes online so, you can join a class virtually, and get the social connection benefits of exercise too.
- Download some exercise apps for your phone or tablet

Go freestyle:

If a structured routine is not your style, get creative and build your own workout. Instead of weights use household items like filled water bottles and cans or jars of food. Walk or run on the spot for 30 second intervals, do some star jumps, planks, sit ups, push-ups, or even burpees. Anything to get your heart rate up a little.

Track your Exercise with Premier's Active April:

[Premier's Active April](#) provides Victorians with tools to help them move at home, virtually connect with others and stay motivated. It's free, it's fun and it's part of the Victorian Government's commitment to getting more people active and healthy.

Each day you can quickly and easily log your physical activity in the activity tracker, either on your phone or computer. You can join the Western Health team (**Team ID: western-health**) or create and join other virtual teams, compare the progress of team members, and keep motivated. Plus, you can earn virtual trophies – unlock more trophies by sharing your achievements on social media, referring a friend or creating or joining virtual teams.

<https://www.activeapril.vic.gov.au/>



Useful Online Resources:

[Be Active – 5 Ways to Wellbeing](#)

[This Girl Can - VicHealth](#)

[SportAus - Find Your 30 at Home campaign](#)

[How exercise can help during COVID-19 - VicHealth](#)

[How to stay active during a pandemic – Beyond Blue](#)