



The importance of physical activity - modifying our behaviours for the better

Physical activity is any bodily movement that is produced by the muscles resulting in energy expenditure. Some forms of physical activity are as simple as walking or cycling, daily house-hold tasks such as gardening or even taking the stairs. Being physically active on a regular basis can improve an individual's overall health and wellbeing and significantly reduce your chances of developing chronic diseases.

So why are we becoming increasingly inactive?

Currently, a significant proportion of Australians are spending more time sitting in a chair than they are physically moving. Increased sedentary time is associated with higher levels of weight gain, poor nutrition, lack of energy, and a greater risk of developing health problems.

Over the years there has been a serious decline in the rates of physical activity, particularly in Australia. This is not only due to sedentary work environments, but the increasing use of technology, changes in transportation and the common excuse of just generally having a 'busy' lifestyle with work and family. There is no excuse for not being able to incorporate some form of physical activity into your day.

We are all capable of modifying our everyday behaviours to ensure that we are more physically active.

Being physically active is imperative in maintaining good overall health and well-being and has significant health benefits including:

- ▶ Reduced risk of developing chronic conditions
- ▶ Improved bone and functional health
- ▶ Greater cardiorespiratory fitness
- ▶ Maintenance of weight
- ▶ Improvement of mental well-being
- ▶ Reduced risk of falls
- ▶ Improved energy levels

So what are the current recommendations?

- ▶ Be active on most days, preferably every day
- ▶ Accumulate 150-300 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity each week
- ▶ Minimise the amount of time spent in prolonged sitting
- ▶ Break up long periods of sitting as often as possible



To increase our physical activity all we need to do is take frequent breaks from work and get up and move. This may involve filling up a water bottle, walking to the bathroom, taking the stairs, taking five minutes during the day to stretch or using an alternative mode of transport such as walking or cycling.

Improving our physical activity is not hard and small modifications to our current daily behaviours can significantly improve our health outcomes for the better.

Five things to do during your lunch break

Lunch breaks don't have to be boring mix them up with a few of these helpful ideas

Keep these tips in mind on your next lunch break:

- ▶ Eat a healthy meal - ensuring your lunch is full of essential nutrients can improve concentration and work productivity as well as maintain blood sugar levels, therefore increasing energy levels and reducing the likelihood of sugar cravings in the afternoon.
- ▶ Socialise with friends - catch up with friends outside of work at a local coffee shop and make your lunch break something you look forward to.
- ▶ Schedule 'me time' – our busy schedules leave no time for self-reflection. Use your

lunch break to write down your thoughts, achievements and goals or even incorporate some colouring in for relaxation.

- ▶ Get moving – a quick workout during your lunch break can help to relieve stress and improve focus. A workout doesn't have to be hard it can be a quick walk around the block or up and down some stairs. Getting active will help you feel energised and ready to tackle the rest of the afternoon.
- ▶ Go outside and get some sunshine. Sitting in an office all day can be draining and can affect your overall mood, particularly when your office has no natural sunlight. Using your lunch break to get outside will improve your mood and concentration levels making you feel happier.



Super Easy Banana and Date Loaf

In this recipe dates are used as a natural sweetener. Dates have a surprisingly high amount of essential vitamins and minerals, plus extra fibre which helps with your gut health. Although still high in natural sugar (fructose and dextrose), dates are a much better alternative than raw sugar.

Ingredients:

- ▶ 300 grams over ripe bananas
- ▶ 3 eggs
- ▶ 2 tablespoons maple syrup (or honey)
- ▶ 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ▶ 1/4 cup macadamia oil (or olive oil)
- ▶ 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon, ground
- ▶ 1/2 teaspoon baking powder mixed with a tablespoon lemon juice
- ▶ 200 grams almond meal
- ▶ 1 cup dates, chopped

Method:

Preheat oven to 160 degrees celsius (320F). Place the bananas into the large bowl of a food processor and pulse until smooth and smashed. Add the eggs, maple syrup, vanilla, macadamia oil, cinnamon and baking powder mixed with a tablespoon of lemon, pulse to combine. Add the almond meal and pulse to combine. Fold through the dates. Pour the batter into a loaf tin lined with baking paper and bake for 45 minutes – one hour or until a skewer inserted removes cleanly. Allow to cool for five minutes or so in the tin before removing to cool completely on a wire rack.



Notes:

Add a handful of walnuts for that extra crunch and energy boost.

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