

## 7 ways to stay motivated

Half the battle with exercise is getting started – the other half is sticking with it! There are some key things to think about.

- Make it fun – If exercise is boring or unpleasant, you will do your utmost to avoid it. That's why it's so important to make it as enjoyable as possible. Why not get some mates together for a run, bike ride or game of football - or try mastering a new sport.
- Make it varied – Varying your activities not only helps prevent boredom, it also gives your body a better challenge, by using a greater range of muscles and movement patterns. For example, you could hit the gym on Mondays and Wednesdays, swim on Thursday and go for a long walk with your partner at the weekend.
- Set goals – Every journey needs a destination – and knowing what you are aiming to achieve through physical activity makes it easier to stick with it, particularly when exercise feels tough. You may want to get fit for a physical challenge, such as a fun run or charity bike ride or lose a stone in weight. Once you've set your goal, decide on a deadline by which you want to achieve it – one that is realistic but challenging – and then start your journey. Remember the golden rule: make haste slowly!
- Look for support – Get some support for your new regime. Ideally, recruit an exercise buddy to do your activities with you – which provides both a social element and some competition! Or you might consider joining a class or group – or becoming a member of a gym.
- Fit it in – Exercise – like any appointment – has to be fitted in to your lifestyle. So rather than pledging to exercise 'every day', think about where and when you can fit in the different forms of activity and then schedule them in. It's also a great idea to keep an exercise diary in which you record what you did and how it felt. This could prove really helpful – indicating whether certain types of activity made you feel better or worse, for example. And looking back at how much you've done can be very motivating.
- Stay positive – If things don't go quite to plan, don't be discouraged. Stick with it and remember that many of the benefits of exercise go far beyond what we can

immediately see. OK so you may not have lost your belly, or reduced your cholesterol level, for example, but perhaps you are feeling more relaxed and getting on with your partner better. Be patient. Changes take time. It's inevitable that you will occasionally miss the odd session, or not achieve what you set out to – but as long as you keep focused on the ultimate goal and exercise regularly and consistently, you are doing fine.

- Reward yourself. Make sure that you reward yourself for your fitness achievements. Why not try keeping an 'exercise jar', in which you put a small sum of money each time you complete a workout. After a month, empty your jar and spend the money on something just for you.