

Being **Active** When You Have **Depression** or **Anxiety**

Exercise
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Studies show that physical activity can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety as effectively as medication—and without unwanted side effects! Even a little bit of lower-intensity activity can help ease depression. Greater amounts of more intense exercise have an even bigger effect. Exercise lowers symptoms of anxiety, both overall and in the moment.

Just 30 minutes of daily physical activity lowers your chance of depression by 48 percent. Physical activity can also make you feel better about yourself, give you more energy and confidence, and help you be more productive at work. And we haven't even mentioned all the great health benefits of being active.

Both aerobic activity and strength training can be used to manage depression and anxiety alone or with other treatments like medication and therapy. Talk with your doctor about what may work best for you.

Start where you are. Use what you have. **Do what you can.**

Getting Started

Start Small

If you have trouble working up the energy or motivation to exercise, find an activity you'll enjoy and set small, realistic goals. Begin with short periods (like 5, 10 or 15 minutes, or set a goal to walk around the block). Gradually progress.



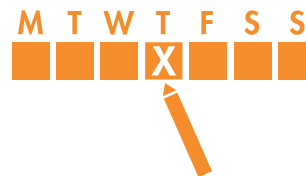
Reach out

Being active with others can improve your mood and help you get out of a sad or anxious frame of mind. Join an activity club, sports team or online activity group. Find an exercise buddy and meet regularly doing something you both enjoy.



Motivation

What will help you stick with an activity plan? Some people find it helpful to schedule exercise at a certain time of day. Others give themselves a fitness challenge.



Be Active Outside

You'll benefit from exercising outdoors or in nature, particularly if you have Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Bundle up in winter to benefit from this natural form of light therapy!



To stay safe and injury free:

- Warm up and cool down before and after exercise.
- Start with light to medium effort.
- Gradually increase your pace and time spent being active. Start low and go slow!

Aerobic Activity



Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing. Build up from doing 150 minutes/week of medium-effort activity (like a brisk walk, light cycling or water exercise) to a challenging activity (like jogging, singles tennis or hiking hills).

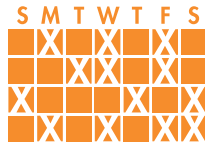
What?

Any rhythmic activity



How often?

3-5 days/week



How hard?

Fairly light to somewhat hard



How much?

Start with 5-10 minutes. Gradually build up to 30-60 total minutes.



Remember: Fit in 10, 15 or 30 minutes whenever you can. It all adds up! To lose weight, do twice as much activity.

Aerobic Activity Cautions

- Some psychotropic medications can cause dizziness, slower movement and coordination problems, especially when you first start taking them or change your dosage. Check with your health care provider about these effects.
- Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after exercise.

Strength Training



Strength training, for example working with weights or resistance bands, makes you stronger and improves your overall health. Plus, strength training can make daily activities like lifting laundry baskets or yardwork easier and safer.

What?

Hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines or your own body (for example, kitchen counter push-ups or chair squats)



How often?

2-3 Days/week



How hard?

Start with light effort. Build up to medium or hard effort.



How much?

10-15 repetitions to start (for each major muscle group). Build up to 8-12 reps of challenging effort. Repeat 2-4 times.



Remember: Avoid straining or holding your breath when lifting. If you need it, get help from a qualified personal trainer. They can teach you the right way to do exercises and breathe properly.

Other Types of Physical Activity

Yoga, Pilates and tai chi can improve your mood and have been shown to help many people with depression or anxiety. To improve flexibility, stretch a muscle to the point of feeling tightness for 10-30 seconds (30-60 seconds for older adults).

How will I get started **this week?** _____