

# EFDS Inclusive Fitness Initiative: Benefits of being active



Using a gym is more than just about getting fit. Being physically active is a lifestyle choice for many disabled people.

Regular exercise is proven to provide social and personal benefits as well as improving physical and mental health.

Physical activity can be classed as many forms: exercise, sport, physical fitness and being active to name a few. The most appropriate definition is that from the Council of Europe's European Sports Charter 1993:

*“Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.”*

It has been well published that the Government has been encouraging the UK population to become more active.

There are recommended levels of physical activity for both men and women which can have positive benefits on everyday life.

## Health Benefits:

- Reduce the overall risk of cancer
- Boost the immune system
- In combination with a balanced diet, help to maintain a healthy weight (Nearly 7 out of 10 men and 6 in 10 women in the UK are overweight or obese according to the National Audit Office (NAO) (1)
- Lower high blood pressure - reducing the risk of developing heart disease
- Promote healthy blood sugar levels to prevent or control diabetes
- Evidence suggests that active people live a longer life-(Achieving the recommended levels of moderate intensity physical activity can reduce premature mortality by between 20-30%). (2)
- Provides natural pain relief

## Social Benefits:

- Boost self-confidence and help prevent depression
- Regular exercise can even help with the treatment of depression and anxiety
- As muscle definition is improved and body fat reduced, this can help to make you feel better about your appearance
- Everyday Life
- Physical activity improves co-ordination
- Improves strength and balance and hence reduces falls and fractures.
- Improvements in quality of sleep
- Promotes psychological well-being and reduces feelings of stress

## Economic Benefits

- Perform better at work as you have a greater mental and physical ability
- Motivation improved leads to increased productivity and efficiency
- Annual costs of physical inactivity in England to be in the region of £8.2 billion; costs of obesity alone being a further £2.5 billion. (3)
- Sickness absence costs employers a minimum of £18 billion each year, which roughly equates to 16% of salary costs.

## References

1 National Audit Office (2001). Tackling Obesity in England. London

2 The Information Centre (2006) Statistics on obesity, physical activity and diet. London: The Information Centre.

3 Department of Health (2004) At least five a week: Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship on health. London: Department of health.

## Contact us:

Our [IFI team](#) can support you to find your nearest IFI gym and useful contacts. Alternatively, you can call 01509 227750.