

## **Benefits of Exercise**

### **1) Strengthen muscles**

A week of bed-rest can result in a 15-20% loss of muscle strength. Muscles also lose their elastic feel which causes them to become more painful when stretched. Exercise helps to strengthen muscles, which increases our ability to complete activities.

### **2) Strengthen bones**

After six months of complete bed rest, 40% of the body's calcium is lost. The bones rely on calcium for their strength. Loss of calcium causes the bones to become weaker and increases the risk of them breaking (osteoporosis). Exercise and weight-bearing through bones helps to strengthen them.

### **3) Mobilise joints**

Exercise helps to move joints which can reduce the pain that is caused by tightness and stiffness. This can help to increase movement. Exercise also strengthens muscles, which in turn helps to support our joints.

### **4) Cardiovascular benefits**

This refers to the heart, blood vessels and lungs. The heart is a muscle, and if it is not exercised it becomes smaller and works less efficiently. This means less oxygen can be carried around the body and you are likely to feel more tired. Exercise has important benefits to our cardiovascular system.

### **5) Lowers the risk of mortality**

A low cardio respiratory level of fitness is the leading attributable factor in ALL causes of death. Inactivity kills more people than smoking, diabetes and obesity combined due to its link with increasing the likelihood of heart problems, diabetes and some forms of cancer.

## **6) Brain**

Exercise increases the blood flow to the brain, which increases its oxygen supply, therefore reducing tiredness, increasing alertness.

## **7) Improved sleep**

Exercise helps to tire the body in the day and helps to manage stress, both of which help promote a good night's sleep.

## **8) Improved mood and ability to cope with stress**

Exercise reduces levels of the body's stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol. It also stimulates the production of endorphins, the body's natural painkillers and mood enhancers.

## **9) Boost confidence and self-esteem**

When we set ourselves realistic and achievable goals in relation to exercise, we can grow in confidence as we achieve these, leading to more positive and helpful judgements of ourselves.

## **10) Weight loss/management**

Along with diet, exercise plays an important role in controlling your weight and preventing obesity.

## **11) Improve balance and co-ordination**

For older adults in particular, doing balance and muscle-strengthening activities in addition to moderate-intensity aerobic activity can help reduce risk of falling.