Irish Life

Wellbeing

# 5 simple steps to boost your Physical Activity






According to a recent Irish Life survey, when it comes to physical health almost 50% of us say we know what we "should" be doing…. the problem is following through.

Equally worth looking at is about ½ of adult's report undertaking the minimum amount of physical activity per week (150 mins mod / 75 mins vigorous) – so for about half of us there may be an opportunity there. What can we do to counter this? Irish Life Wellbeing Physical Health & Nutrition Consultant Rab Das shares his insights.

We can think differently on what counts as physical activity, we can start where we are versus comparing ourselves to what everyone else might be doing, and we can add to what we do already and build for the future.

Here are 5 things that we can do to help us get active and stay active without fitness becoming the biggest thing in our lives.

**Remember, we want physical activity and fitness to ENHANCE, NOT RULE our lives.**

## 1 Reducing sedentary time

If you spend a lot of time sitting, the goal here is to find ways to break that up. This might look like time at a desk or time sitting down. The simplest way to approach this might be to create some active space at the start or end of every hour. This means that you're breaking up any time that you might not be as active as you want to be.

Remember that active time doesn't have to be structured activity – if you're busy on your feet, spending time with your family, engaging in any household activities – this still counts and it's wise to be aware of this. You could be doing more than you think!

## 2 Some is better than none

We often get bogged down by how much we should be doing and by what the guidelines say we should be doing. And make no mistake, the guidelines are really good things to understand and try to implement. But sometimes, these things become the barrier.

When it comes down to it, some is better than none. What does that mean? Making the time that you have matter when it comes to doing any physical activity.

Remember that everything counts and sometimes that's the best starting point. Do you have 5 minutes to get moving? Great. Do you have 10 minutes? Even better. Start where you are.

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## 3 More is better than some

If you already do some activity in your day to day and week to week, try to identify opportunities where more can be done. This may look like more structured elements or could just be a little add on to your existing plan.

An extra 10 minutes per day can really make a difference.

Remember the same goes for anyone looking to achieve any loftier activity goals. The idea remains the same.

## 4 Don't forget about resistance training

A crucial area of physical fitness and health that is becoming ever more important is resistance training. If we are thinking and talking about living well in the present and into the future, doing one or two bouts of resistance training per week is a must. This can be in a gym, at home, or even in one to two short 5-minute bouts per day using your own body weight.

Remember, we simply want to start challenging our muscles to respond to resistance so that they get stronger and support our bones to do so as well.

## 5 Big things come from small beginnings

It's easy to compare our fitness habits to other people in the environment we find ourselves in. That can create a self-critical view of ourselves and lead us toward less compassionate answers based on our own personal circumstances.

Taking an honest look at how, when, and where we can add physical activity into our day to day helps us solve this modern problem. From the points outlined above, we can see that small habits actioned repeatedly add up to positive impacts on our lives.

Remember, don't stress over what someone else is doing; think about what you can do and how you can start or keep adding to what you already do.

Wrapping up here, you might recognise that you haven't been given any strict recommendations but rather a philosophy of thought for how we should approach physical activity habits.

Your day to day will look different from someone else's, and your time and responsibility will be different too. By thinking about physical activity through the lens of the 5 ideas above, you get to decide what to do, when to do it, and what it looks like for you. That makes it more personal to you and if there's anything you have come to understand about habits and habit formation, the more personal something is to you, the more likely you are to engage with it regularly.

**This week ask yourself:**

a Realistically, where do I find myself with my physical activity and fitness habits?

b What's been a barrier for me in the past?

c What's worked for me in the past?

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