

Kick out the winter gloom – and keep moving to stay mentally fit

DID you know that your mental health can suffer from reduced levels of physical activity?

With the colder weather upon us, we're more likely to retreat to the warmth and comfort of our homes.

It becomes very easy to reduce our level of exercise during the winter months.

There is growing scientific evidence that aerobic exercise can be used to prevent and treat depression.

Just three 45-minute sessions of exercise a week is enough to provide anti-depressant benefits for your own mental health.

Exercise doesn't need to be strenuous to see improvements – moderate activities such as walking, cycling, lap swimming, or anything that



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causes a rise in heart rate will give your brain a boost.

Find a friend and go for a walk together or incorporate some activity into your catch-ups with family or friends.

A recent study of 1.24 million people showed that those who participated in exercise experienced significantly fewer days per month suffering from poor mental health.

The biggest differences were associated with those people involved in team sports and forms of aerobic exercise.

Aside from the positive

mental health benefits of exercise, it can also improve your self-esteem, self-confidence and sleeping patterns.

And it's a great way to reduce stress. If you're not keen to face the cold weather, consider what activities you can do in your own home.

Grab a can of soup for a simple arm workout or do some leg lifts while watching TV. Maintaining good muscle strength will also provide positive health benefits and can be easily achieved in the comfort of home.

Get creative and try to keep moving – don't let the weather cloud your mood.

Mel Ottaway is Uniting Communities' executive manager, services for older people



It becomes easy to reduce our level of activity during the colder winter months, but it's important to keep moving, Uniting Communities' Mel Ottaway says. Picture: Istock



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