

Exercise, it's more important than you think!

Exercise comes in many forms. Whether you're a triathlete pushing the boundaries of physical fitness and hauling yourself around an Ironman course or you prefer a few casual lengths in the local swimming pool followed by a nice long rewarding lounge in the sauna, the importance of exercise should not be underrated.



More and more research is showing us the benefits to exercising on a regular basis. It

is currently recommended that we all try to manage 30 minutes of exercise 3 times a week. In our busy lives of working, commuting and looking after families this can seem like quite a challenge, but here's why you should make the effort to dust off those old loyal trainers who have sat idly by waiting for the day you to return to them.

In 2015 a study reviewing the benefits of outdoor walking found that this had positive effects on; reducing blood pressure, cholesterol levels, body mass index and depression scores, whilst improving participants fitness levels. Exercise isn't just a great way to help prevent serious illnesses related to cardiac, respiratory or obesity issues. It is also a great way to assist with rehabilitation if you have been unfortunate to suffer from ill health. There are reports of two-way links between depression and cardiovascular disease. People suffering from depression are twice as likely to develop cardiovascular disease, whilst after a cardiovascular event the risk of



depression onset is increased, but exercise is a great way to break this cycle. Another study looking at the benefits of CrossFit participation on mental health outcomes had results of improved scores of self-esteem in females.

Exercise is pretty good for us then! The wonderful thing about

exercise is that there are so many variations that you can find something that you both enjoy and fits in with your busy lifestyle. Whether that be simply taking the dog for a walk, or attending Yoga classes once a week with your friends. With technology advancing at a ferocious pace it enables us to gain more information about our exercising habits than ever before with minimal effort. Most mobile phones will give you a rough idea of how many steps that you've done each day. Apps can monitor how well you've slept, and you can keep tabs on your calorie intake. This is a great way to get competitive with yourself, to set targets and beat records. And if you're as competitive as me, you'll soon be finding yourself taking the stairs instead of the lift and you'll walk to the shops instead of hopping on the bus just to get those extra steps in. All these little changes start to add up and soon you'll be noticing a fitter, stronger, thinner you.

If you are new to regular exercise or a sport, my advice is to build up gradually. I see dozens of patients every year in January and February who have taken up regular exercise as part of the "new year, new me" culture. They end up injured as they have just overloaded their bodies through sheer enthusiasm. If you are unsure as to how much you should be doing when you first start, you can always consult a coach or physiotherapist or trainer to gain an idea of where to start. Running apps like the couch to 5K (C25K) are a great training aid to give you a structured approach to your training.

The key is to pick something you enjoy that you can fit in, and that way you will be far more likely to stick to it. It doesn't matter what it is just make it fun!

