

# Driving and your health - Think about it!



## Fact Sheet No.7:

### Be Active Every Day



#### 1. Why be active every day?

Being physically active is an important part of **living better and living longer**.

- **It helps you feel better** – with more energy, vitality and better sleep, to help you stay alert on the road and help you get more out of life.
- **It helps you manage your weight** – not only do you look and feel better, you'll also reduce your chances of developing heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and back pain.
- **It helps to strengthen muscles and joints** - building strength and flexibility is a sure way to reduce your chance of being off the road with an injury.
- **It helps you to clear away negative thoughts and have a healthier state of mind** – exercise is a great way to manage stress, and it improves concentration and self-confidence.
- **It helps you to experience better health** – by helping to control blood pressure and cholesterol, which will reduce your chances of having a heart attack.

People who are NOT physically active are almost **TWICE** as likely to die from coronary heart disease (heart attack) compared to those who are active. (Source: *Burden of Disease and Injury in Australia 1999*).

#### 2. How can you be more active every day?

The key to fitting more exercise into your day is to think of movement as an opportunity, not an inconvenience!

**Aim for 30 minutes of activity on most days.**  
Here's how:

##### ★ Look for opportunities to be active when you're on the road

- During breaks go for a brisk 10 -15-minute walk (aim for 2 of these a day) – this will clear your head and re-energise you.
- Use a pedometer (step counter) for motivation and to monitor your progress – aim to walk 10,000 steps per day.
- When you're on your break – throw a frisbee or kick a footy with your mates.
- Try the **Exercises for the Road** (Driving and Your Health Information Supplement) a couple of times per day.

##### ★ S-t-r-e-t-c-h

The long hours of sitting and concentrating can contribute to back problems and stiffness so it's important that you make time every day to break and stretch. The Information Supplement, **Exercises for the Road** includes some easy stretches, which will help you maintain flexibility, relieve tight muscles and release tension.

## ★ Be active with your family and mates

It's much easier and more fun to stay active when you **exercise with someone else – even if it's the dog!** Being active together is also a great relationship builder:

- go for a regular bike ride, swim or walk with your family on your days off or in the evenings;
- play with the kids or take the dog for a walk;
- go hiking with your mates or play footy, cricket or frisbee during your breaks – a great stress buster.



## ★ At home – don't just sit there!

It's tempting after long days on the road just to sit and veg, but you'll find you feel a whole better if you combine rest with exercise. Any movement is better than none so:

- get up and change the channel instead of using the TV remote control;
- mow the lawn or do some gardening; or
- walk to the shops instead of taking the car.

## ★ Set yourself a goal to be active



Setting yourself some goals to become more active is a great way to get motivated and keep on track. Goals need to be realistic and achievable. As a start you could aim to **walk 30 minutes a day, three times a week for one month**. Don't give up, especially in the early stages when you may not see results - the benefits will come. And if you do have 'one of those weeks' that's okay. Just begin again...and keep moving!

**REMEMBER if you haven't been active recently, visit your doctor before starting a new physical activity program. Also stretch before and after exercise and wear appropriate footwear.**

## 3. For more information

Contact:

- Your local fitness centre, e.g. YMCA.
- Heart Foundation (in your capital city).
- Government organisations, e.g. "Go for your Life" in Victoria – [www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au](http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au).
- Your local Health Professional.
- Information Supplement, **Exercises for the Road** on the NTC website [www.ntc.gov.au](http://www.ntc.gov.au).

**For more information see  
[www.ntc.gov.au](http://www.ntc.gov.au)**

**Looking after your health is like looking after your vehicle - regular care and maintenance pays off in the long run**

The Driving and Your Health Campaign is supported by:

