



## TOPIC 2

# Physical activity and fitness

## Topic introduction

### Background

Being physically active is important to maintain and improve physical and mental well-being, to prevent long-term health conditions and in weight management. There is an obvious link with the healthy eating topic – keeping and maintaining a healthy body weight depends on a balance between energy intake from food and energy used up by the body's functions and physical activity.

There are social and economic barriers to taking up organised physical activity: lack of confidence, transport and time and money are just some of the factors that prevent people from accessing leisure or sports facilities. However, it is important to stress to learners that physical activity does not need to involve organised activities such as joining a gym or attending exercise classes. Many everyday activities such as housework, do-it-yourself, brisk walking and gardening involve physical activity. In these materials the term 'physical activity' is used rather than 'exercise' to get this point across.

### National targets / policies

The NHS policy guidance: *Choosing activity: a physical activity action plan* (2005) sets out the Government's plans to encourage and promote participation in physical activity in England. It is a summary of how the Department of Health will deliver the commitments on physical activity outlined in the 2004 public health white paper *Choosing health: making healthier choices easier*. Key to it is ensuring that people in all parts of society get the information they need to understand:

- the links between activity and better health
- where the opportunities exist in daily life to be active.

It also outlines the Chief Medical Officer's minimum recommendations for physical activity as follows.

- Children and young people should spend at least 60 minutes each day doing at least moderate-intensity physical activity. At least twice a week this should include activities to improve bone health (activities that produce high physical stresses on the bones), muscle strength and flexibility.
- For general health benefit, adults should spend at least 30 minutes a day doing at least moderate-intensity physical activity on at least five days each week.
- The recommended levels of activity can be achieved by doing all the daily activity in one session, or through several shorter bouts of activity of 10

minutes or more. The activity can be lifestyle activity or structured exercise or sport, or a combination of these.

- More specific activity recommendations for adults are made for beneficial effects for individual diseases and conditions. All movement contributes to energy expenditure and is important for weight management. It is likely that for many people, 45–60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a day is necessary to prevent obesity. For bone health, activities that produce high physical stresses on the bones are necessary.
- The recommendations for adults are also appropriate for older adults. Older people should take particular care to keep moving and retain their mobility through daily activity. Additionally, specific activities that promote improved strength, coordination and balance are particularly beneficial for older people.

### This topic

This topic includes the following themes:

- Being active
- Using leisure facilities
- Following a movement class
- Heart rate and pulse

### Further information and suggestions

- ‘Green Gyms’ offer people the opportunity to undertake physical activity while working outside on environmental projects such as woodland management. Recent evidence suggests that people expend more calories on such projects than during formal exercise classes and in addition gain general health and social benefits ([www.greengym.org.uk](http://www.greengym.org.uk)).
- **Walking The Way To Health Initiative (WHI)** aims to get more people walking in their own communities, especially those who take little exercise or live in areas of poor health ([www.whi.org.uk](http://www.whi.org.uk)).
- Many regeneration programmes such as *New Deal for Communities* also have physical activity programmes (e.g. FAB – Fit and Active – in Braunstone, Leicester).

## Mapping to the core curriculum

Topic 2 Physical activity and fitness				
Theme	Literacy	Language	Numeracy	Page references
Being active	SLd/E3.1, Rw/E3.1		HD1/E3.1	96–107
Using leisure facilities	Rt/E3.7, Rw/E3.1		HD1/E3.1, MSS1/L1.3	108–114
Following a movement class		Rw/E3.1a, Lr/E3.1c, Sc/E3.4a		115–126
Heart rate and pulse			MSS1/L1.3, N2/L1.3, N2/L1.9	127–133

Highlighted curriculum items [      ] = included in National Tests