



Incidental vs. Intentional Exercise

Incidental exercise is the physical activity required to engage in normal daily activities across our day. Some examples of incidental exercise are taking the stairs instead of the lift; walking to the shops instead of driving; and movements executed when cleaning the house. Incidental exercise is usually completed in small bouts which accumulate over the day. Increasing your amount of incidental exercise through lifestyle modifications has been shown to have a positive impact on your Cardiovascular health, alongside assisting with maintaining muscular conditioning and bone health.

A common barrier to regular engagement in a structured exercise program is that people don't have enough time within their day. Making small modifications to how we approach normal daily tasks can assist with increasing our incidental exercise contribution to our daily physical activity. Some examples for how to increase your incidental exercise are:

- ◆ Take the stairs not the lift
- ◆ Walk to the shops, bus stop or school instead of driving
- ◆ Park your car further away from your destination and walk the rest of the journey
- ◆ Break up cleaning and gardening tasks for completion across a week
- ◆ Walk the dog
- ◆ Play outdoors with your children
- ◆ Volunteer to help at local community events

So, if you are increasing your incidental exercise, does this mean that you don't have to complete a structured exercise routine?

No! Engaging in intentional structured exercise is just as important as increasing your incidental activity in order to foster good physical and emotional wellbeing and ensuring that we are meeting the Australian Guidelines for Physical Activity. Structured intentional exercise allows us to focus on specific aspects of our physical health that we would like to improve or maintain, engage socially with others, and foster positive impacts on our mood and emotional wellbeing. Some examples of structured incidental exercise include:

- ◆ Yoga, Pilates and group fitness classes
- ◆ Aqua aerobics
- ◆ Swimming
- ◆ Moderate intensity walking
- ◆ Resistance training at the gym
- ◆ Cardiovascular intervals at the gym or outdoors
- ◆ Engaging in team sports or social sports

The Australian Guidelines for Physical Activity recommends that adults accumulate 150-300 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity - or a combination of both - each week. Speak with an accredited Exercise Physiologist to assist with developing a suitable structured exercise program/ routine, alongside discussing strategies to maximise your incidental exercise, to ensure that you are meeting the recommendation required to foster positive physical and emotional wellbeing.

References:

Department Of Health 2020. Australia's Physical Activity And Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines And The Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines. [online] Available at: <<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines>> [Accessed 10 April 2020].

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