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Vergie Charlery's Self Care e-Book #2

# Physical Activity



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## Physical Self-Care

When most people think about self-care, they imagine healthy diets, regular exercise, or a trip to the spa. All these self-care notions have one thing in common: they involve taking care of our bodies in one way or another. But what exactly is physical self-care?

Maintaining the health of your body is essential for your continued well-being. After all, if your body isn't feeling well, you can't enjoy good fortunes in any other domains of your life. Physical self-care includes behaviours and processes you

use to promote the healthy functioning of your body. Therefore, any actions that you take to achieve or manage optimal physical health can be part of your physical self-care.

Just like complete self-care requires a multidimensional approach, physical self-care consists of different dimensions. In other words, taking care of your body involves taking care of all its needs. This is precisely what we will cover in this module: everything you might need to keep your entire body healthy.



# Physical Exercise

Our bodies were built to move, but the modern human lifestyle is sedentary, especially in the Western hemisphere. Our jobs often require us to sit most of the day. Unfortunately, this lifestyle can harm our physical and mental well-being.

Research has associated physical inactivity with enhanced stress responses in the body. On the other hand, regular physical activity can reverse the adverse effects of stress (Tsatsoulis & Fountoulakis, 2006; Jayakody, Gunadasa & Hosker, 2014). Moreover, exercises that

moderately elevate your heart rate also help you fight cardiovascular diseases. World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity per week for adults to achieve optimal cardiovascular fitness (WHO, 2010). Moderate activity is defined as an exercise that increases your heart rate by approximately 40% from its resting state, whereas vigorous activity raises it by 60% or higher (MacIntosh et al., 2021).

Have you been inactive lately or want to discover exercises to incorporate into your routine? When choosing an exercise, you might want to consider your age, body composition, and general fitness level. If you are healthy in general, you can start with easy workouts and progress slowly. On that note, it is always a good idea to consult with a healthcare professional about any existing health conditions or concerns before starting a new exercise routine.

The other factors to consider are the time, space, and equipment requirements you might need. You can do some exercises at home with no equipment. Other activities require you to purchase a membership at a gym or a club, or you may need special equipment and lessons. Furthermore, some activities like skiing may require you to travel to a specific location in addition to any gear and lessons you might need.



You might want to keep in mind that the activity you pick should fit your schedule and budget. Preferably, it should also be fun or pleasurable for you. That way, you'd look forward to exercising instead of dreading it. Many activities count, including brisk walks, bicycling, running, swimming, and even cleaning your home.

Here are several moderate and vigorous exercise suggestions to choose from (Ainsworth et al., 1993; American Heart Association, 2022; MacIntosh et al., 2021).



## Moderate-intensity activities

- Brisk walking
- Hiking on a level surface
- Water aerobics
- Snorkelling
- Riding a bicycle (slow)
- Roller skating
- Gymnastics
- Playing Frisbee
- Fencing
- Low-effort skiing
- Dancing
- Gardening
- Tennis (Doubles)
- Horseback riding
- Playing in a marching band
- Washing your car
- Raking leaves
- Cleaning activities (vacuuming, mopping, etc.)

# High-intensity activities

- Running
- Hiking uphill
- Jumping rope
- Swimming laps
- Riding a bicycle (fast)
- Farming activities
- Tennis (singles)
- Martial arts such as karate, kung fu, judo, and taekwondo
- Canoeing and kayaking in whitewater
- Scuba diving
- Playing polo
- Rock climbing
- Backpacking
- Shoveling snow
- Basketball, hockey, soccer, and other running-based sports



## Preventive Care

Prevention and early detection are the best defences against potential health problems. Yet, many of us seek health advice and care only after feeling ill. There are a few things we can do to be proactive about our physical health, such as avoiding things that can undermine our health, noticing changes in our bodies, and attending regular preventive care visits.

So, how do we avoid harming our bodies? Let's discuss skincare as an example. When we think about skincare, we are talking about protecting your skin against harmful ultraviolet (UV) light. We may think that it is okay to skip sunscreen, but excess UV-light exposure via tanning beds or sun exposure can age our skin and even cause skin cancer. Indeed, skin cancer is one of the most frequently observed cancers in individuals with light skin tones (Iannacone, Hughes, and Green, 2014). One of the most effective ways to prevent skin cancer and premature skin aging is applying sunscreen to exposed parts of our skin. However, when selecting a new sunscreen, you might want to refer to the Environmental Working Group (EWG) database to ensure you are using an option that is safe for you and the environment. We can also protect ourselves from harmful UV radiation by staying in the shade

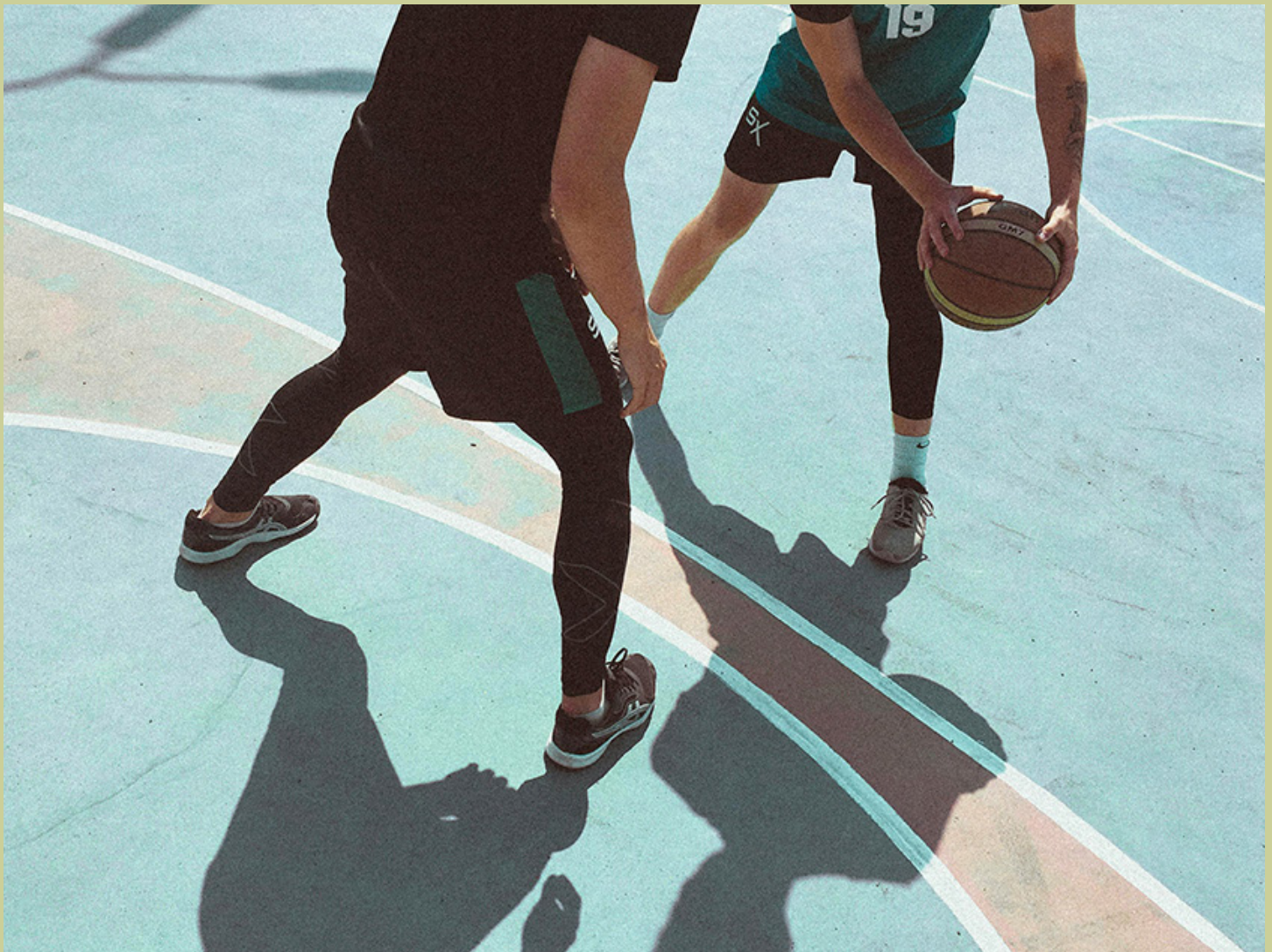
and, if possible, using hats, sunglasses, and umbrellas. Moreover, we can also be vigilant about concerning changes such as new or enlarged moles, discolorations, or changes in hair texture, as these changes may be associated with serious health problems.





Routine check-ups allow your doctor to monitor your general health and detect any changes so that they can be addressed promptly. The same goes for taking care of your teeth and visiting your dentist regularly. It is best to attend our routine check-ups and let our doctors know if we experience any symptoms or have questions. If your

doctor is having a hard time figuring out your health issues, you might consult with a functional medicine practitioner—a person who will consider your whole system when providing health advice. Knowing that your health issues are being taken care of or that you are healthy can give you peace of mind and help you feel in control of your health.





## In Sum

Many of us take care of our belongings better than we take care of our bodies. However, ignoring our health needs can impact our well-being and happiness by reducing our productivity and ability to cope with stress. Taking care of our bodies means taking care of all our physical needs, from eating healthy and exercising regularly to taking breaks and sleeping well. Furthermore, being proactive about our physical health allows us to address any conditions as early as possible.

