



Consensus Statement Physical  
activity and health conditions;  
benefits outweigh the risks



# Connecting with health and wellbeing

*“ Strengthening the connections between sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing, so more people can feel the benefits of, and advocate for, an active life.”*

## **Unlock health for all**

Being active can maintain or improve health, wellbeing or quality of life

## **An equal chance to get benefits of an active life**

Investing more to support those least active can play a role in reducing health inequalities

# Key messages within our communications



The consensus statements are based on a rapid review evidence and have been developed through an academically rigorous consensus process by Healthcare Professionals, for Healthcare Professionals.

The key message is that the risk of adverse events when getting active is low, and that physical activity is safe, even for people living with symptoms of multiple health conditions. Regular physical activity, in combination with standard medical care, has an important role to play in the treatment and prevention of many conditions. Well informed, person centred conversations with healthcare professionals can reassure people and further reduce this risk.

# Context for the Consensus Statement on Risk



- Public Health and Clinical guidelines are clear that physical activity has a key role to play in the management of long term conditions
- The International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) identify integrating physical activity into healthcare as one of the eight best investments to combat inactivity. But there are systemic challenges to making this a reality.
- People with long term conditions being twice as likely to be inactive then those who do not have health conditions.
- These barriers include almost 50% of GPs, in a recent survey of 830 GPs in England, indicating that a barrier to effectively advising patients about physical activity were concerns by the patient about perceived risks of taking up PA (46%), including aggravating symptoms.
- Current pre participation screening protocols within the sport and physical activity sector & requirements for medical clearance

# The response



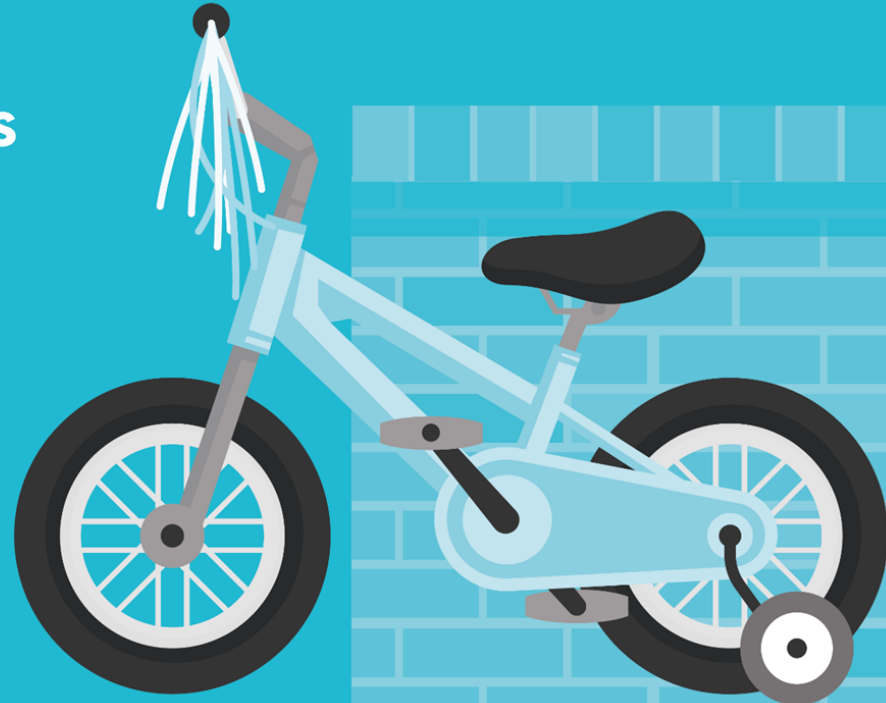
The Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine, Sport England, Office Health Improvement and Disparities (formerly Public Health England) and the Royal College of General Practitioner's have collaborated to enable the development of clear statements, through expert consensus, about the medical risks of physical activity for all adults, irrespective of age, living with one or more long term conditions for healthcare professionals to use to support their clinical practice.

# Headline statements



## 1. The benefits outweigh the risks

Physical activity is safe, even for people living with symptoms from multiple medical conditions.



# Headline statements



## 2. The risk of adverse events is very low but that's not how people feel

Well informed conversations with healthcare professionals can reassure people who are fearful of their condition worsening, and further reduce this risk.



# Headline statements



## 3. It's not as easy as just telling someone to move more

Be aware of the concerns of individuals and their carers to help build confidence





# Headline statements



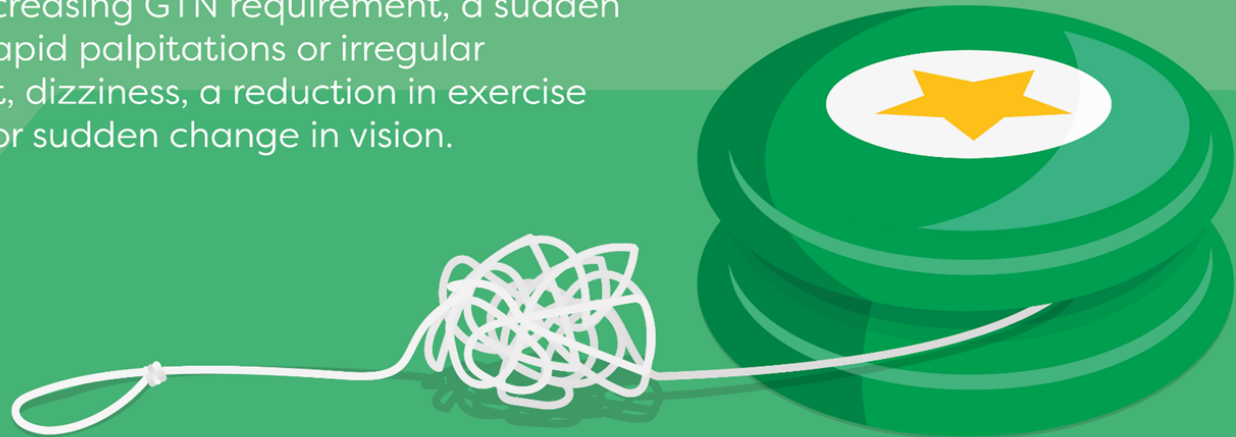
**4. Everyone has their own starting point, begin there and build up gradually**

# Headline statements



## 5. Stop and seek medical review if...

You notice a dramatic increase in breathlessness, new or worsening chest pain and/or increasing GTN requirement, a sudden onset of rapid palpitations or irregular heartbeat, dizziness, a reduction in exercise capacity or sudden change in vision.



# Symptom Statements

- MSK Pain
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Cardiac Chest Pain
- Falls and Frailty
- Dysglycemia
- Palpitations
- Cognitive impairment

*The list of conditions covered by this consensus statement is not exhaustive. For instance, Chronic fatigue syndrome/ME and Long COVID were excluded from this study as evidence regarding the risks of physical activity in these conditions is evolving. Existing guidance should be followed for these conditions.*

**MSK Pain**

- A temporary increase in pain is normal and does not represent tissue damage.
- It will stop once their body adapts.

**Fatigue**

- A temporary increase in fatigue is normal.
- Physical activity is good for fatigue, sleep and wellbeing.

**Shortness of breath**

- Physical activity will make people feel more breathless.
- Breathlessness can be frightening.
- Advise people to start at a low level and build gradually.

**Cardiac chest pain**

- The long-term benefits far outweigh the temporary slight increased risk of adverse events in those with ischaemic heart disease.

**Falls & frailty**

- First, inactive people have much to gain from building strength and balance.
- Even small improvements reduce the risk of falling and improve confidence.
- Activities should be tailored to the individual's functional and cognitive capacity.

**Dysglycemia**

- There is a risk of short-term dysglycemia.
- Hypoglycaemia is the most common adverse event in diabetics treated with insulin or insulin secretagogues, and can occur if not managed appropriately.
- The overall risk of severe hypoglycaemia is not increased.
- High intensity physical activity can make blood glucose levels rise, so people with diabetes will need strategies to deal with this.

**Palpitations**

- Increased awareness of your heart beat during physical activity can be frightening.
- Physical activity is contraindicated in people with symptomatic and uncontrolled cardiac tachy- or brady-arrhythmias and appropriate medical management is needed.
- People with controlled atrial fibrillation benefit from regular physical activity.

**Cognitive impairment**

- Strategies to maintain motivation, engagement and safety are important and people with often benefit from support from others.
- Consider functional level, stage of disease, communication ability, perceived environment, risk of falling and other medical conditions.

Logos: The University of Edinburgh, SPORT ENGLAND, and the University of Glasgow.

## It's safer for people with long-term conditions to be physically active

Healthcare professionals can help overcome patient's fears that physical activity will worsen symptoms of their health condition

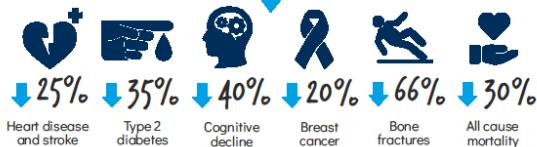
61%  
of people with a long-term condition would like to be more active<sup>1</sup>



89%  
of people trust healthcare professionals most for health advice<sup>2</sup>



## Active people have lower health risks



<sup>1</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee Scientific Report

To help healthcare professionals feel confident about what advice they should give to patients with long-term conditions about being active and overcome fears of worsening symptoms, a risk consensus statement has been peer reviewed and published by the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

The statement has been endorsed by leading health organisations including the Royal College of Nursing, RCGP and Chartered Society of Physiotherapy.



Read the consensus statement around risk on the [Moving Medicine](#) website along with evidence-based consultation guides for a range of conditions to guide you in having conversations about physical activity with patients.

Making our Move is our shared vision for uniting the movement in Notts and Derbyshire. Together, we will address inequality and empower everyone to be active in a way that works for them. To find out more and get involved, visit [www.activeinotts.org.uk](http://www.activeinotts.org.uk) or [www.activederbyshire.org.uk](http://www.activederbyshire.org.uk)

**MAKING OUR MOVE**



# Endorsements to date



# Acknowledgements



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