**What is the magic of micro-movement?**

**Social media**

Micro-movements are short, intense bursts of exercise that can be done anywhere, at any time, designed to help break up sedentary periods during your busy work/life schedule. Happy “snacking”: What is the magic of micro-movement?

**Article**

**You asked; we answered.**

**What is the magic of micro-movement?**

At Vitality, we know first-hand how important physical activity is: exercise helps to improve all aspects of your health and wellbeing.

It protects your bones, strengthens muscles and helps with weight management, on top of the important disease-prevention benefits such as reducing your risk of getting heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, stroke and cancer. And from the physical to the mental, getting active more often also helps you to sleep better, manage stress more easily and improve your overall mental wellbeing.

The exercise challenge we’re facing globally is that we’re just not getting enough of it. 1 in 3 adults currently do not meet the World Health Organization’s recommended levels for physical activity, which equates to 1.8 billion adults across the world.

A big culprit for our lack of activity is sedentary behaviour. This refers to a period of low-energy expenditure while we are awake – for example, sitting in an office chair, lying on our couch watching TV and even driving to work. We’re also spending more and more time on our phones – rather than choosing to dedicate this time to moving our bodies in some way.

**Enter: micro-movements**

Current WHO guidelines suggest that the minimum level of physical activity for us as adults is 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity exercise,” says Mari Leach, Biokineticist at Vitality South Africa. And while that is an important goal for us all, if you’re looking to slowly build up to this then micro-movement or fast fitness is a great start.

Micro-movement is exactly that: small bouts of body movement during your day to break up any extended sedentary periods. This can mean a few minutes of skipping, star jumps, running on the spot, sit ups – anything that gets your heart pumping and that you can sustain for 30+ seconds at a time.

***Do you spend hours each day in online meetings?***

*Can you instead join these calls while you walk around the office?*

***Do you drive to the shops?***

*Can you make yourself park further away so that you need to walk more?*

***Is there an elevator or escalator in your day-to-day life?***

*Can you rather seek out the stairs?*

“Micro-movement is not set in its definition”, says Mari, “So as long as you’re finding something that works for you and your lifestyle, you can feel proud that you’re taking the right steps to better health. The Vitality view is that micro-movement is an empowering addition to any physical activity regimen.”

**Small movements; big results**

This aligns to the latest Vitality research on how best to form healthy habits, and which habits are more likely to stick. Called the [Vitality Habit Index](https://www.vitalityglobal.com/documents/d/guest/gvc_files__the-habit-index-booklet_11mar2024__pdf), the report is co-authored with the *London School of Economics* and introduces the concept of habit laddering through 3 steps:

1. **SET A GOAL:** check where you are currently and understand the health benefits to achieving your goal.
2. **START SMALL (MICRO!):** choose an activity that is easy and practical to do, often.
3. **REPEAT THEN INTENSIFY:** keep up the activity and only increase the intensity once the action has been repeated for between 4 and 6 weeks.

In this way, *micro*-movements can in time become *major*-movements and help us to reach our recommended daily/weekly targets for physical activity.

“None of us need to be reminded that getting physically active is important for overall health and happiness,” says Mari. “And our Vitality research continues to show that exercise substantially impacts our health for the better – adding years, healthy years, to our life.”

*For more information about Vitality’s evidence-based approach that encourages and rewards members for healthier living, visit the* [*Vitality website*](https://www.vitality.com/)*.*

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