

# UK Chief Medical Officers issue advice for health professionals on physical exercise during pregnancy

The new recommendations aim to reduce issues such as obesity, diabetes and other health concerns during pregnancy. The latest evidence suggests pregnant women should carry out around 150 minutes of 'moderate intensity' activity every week.

This is described as 'activity that makes you breathe faster' while still being able to hold a conversation.

This new advice is being issued in the form of an infographic, aimed at providing midwives, nurses, GPs, obstetricians, gynaecologists, as well as the leisure sector, with the latest evidence on physical activity during pregnancy.

Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Dr Frank Atherton, said:

"There is strong evidence that shows that regular, moderate exercise during pregnancy can offer women significant benefits. This includes reducing high blood pressure problems, helping to control weight gain, improving sleep, reducing the risk of diabetes, and improving mood. That's why we want to ensure pregnant women, and the health professionals who support them, are aware of the benefits of physical activity throughout pregnancy.

"Pregnant women who are not currently active, should build up their activity levels slowly, while women who already take part in regular exercise should stay active but listen to their body and adapt their exercise regime if necessary. A general rule for all pregnant women is, if it feels pleasant, keep going; if it is uncomfortable, then stop and seek advice."

Women who have not been active before pregnancy are recommended to follow a gradual progression of exercise—beginning with 10 minute bouts of moderate intensity exercise, gradually building up to 150 minutes. The activity should be spread throughout the week, and it is important to remember that 'every activity counts'.

The new advice was constructed by the CMO Expert Committee for Physical Activity and Pregnancy, which included midwives, obstetricians, exercise physiologist, GPs, Public Health Consultants, Sports Medicine, exercise professionals, nursing and research scientists. The project was led by Professor Marian Knight and Dr Charlie Foster from the University of Oxford. The aim was to produce evidence-based messaging for health professionals to use with the public. The infographic was developed and tested with panels of

health professionals and pregnant women before consultation with more than 250 UK based doctors and midwives.

Health professionals are encouraged to use this infographic to discuss the benefits of physical activity with all pregnant women, to help them maintain a healthy lifestyle, with approximately 1 in 20 women being recorded as obese during pregnancy.

The key points are:

- Pregnant women who are already active should be encouraged to maintain their physical activity levels
  - Women may need to adapt their activity throughout their pregnancy. For example, replacing contact sports with a non-contact sport or an appropriate exercise class
  - Importantly, the evidence supporting this infographic found no evidence of harm for maternal or infant resulting from moderate intensity physical activity
  - Those who were not active before their pregnancy are advised to avoid intense exercise, such as running, jogging, racquet sports, and strenuous strength training. But some activities can be adapted
  - The final safety message is a common sense 'don't bump the bump', referring to all activities which place pregnant women at an increased risk of injury through physical contact
  - The study recommends pregnant women avoid activities where there is an increased risk of falling, trauma or high impact injuries. These include skiing, water skiing, surfing, off-road cycling, gymnastics, horse riding and contact sports such as ice hockey, boxing, football or basketball. They are also discouraged from exercise that requires lying flat on their back after the first trimester
  - If you experience breathlessness before or following minimal exertion, headaches, dizziness, chest pain, muscle weakness affecting balance and calf pain or swelling, seek medical advice. Women may also be advised to reduce/stop physical activity following pregnancy complications such as vaginal bleeding, regular painful contractions or amniotic fluid leakage.
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## **£200,000 to engage communities across Wales in cultural activities**

The Economy Secretary confirmed that eight separate organisations across Wales, including local authorities and housing associations, had been successful in their applications to the Welsh Government's Fusion programme.

Since its inception in 2015, the [Fusion: Creating Opportunities through Culture programme](#) has worked with over 5,000 people and 150 partners to deliver a huge range of projects to young people and adults across Wales. Fusion has enabled community members to widen their horizons and increase their confidence, skills and qualifications by taking part in cultural activities. It has seen young people taking over the running of museums and castles, famous artworks taken out to primary schools and professional opera performances on school buses. Adults have volunteered and gained qualifications to help improve employability, and taken part in schemes to boost health and digital inclusion.

This latest round of Fusion funding will enable innovative partnerships to transform many more lives in some of Wales' most economically disadvantaged areas. Local authorities, housing associations and employment programmes will link directly with museums, theatres, libraries and other cultural sites, ensuring that cultural programmes are accessible to all.

The Economy Secretary, said:

"Fusion is an innovative, low-cost intervention that promotes collaboration to better serve the needs of the people of Wales. Since the launch of the Fusion we have worked with Local Authorities, heritage sites, theatres and others to encourage thousands of people who might not normally have engaged in cultural activities to get involved. I am very pleased to be able to allocate more than £200,000 to eight new projects across Wales that will enable this important work to continue.

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## [Most people in Wales satisfied with their daily lives and public services](#)

The new wide-ranging National Survey for Wales 2016-17 provides a fresh picture of the levels of wellbeing and satisfaction with public services in Wales and the issues facing local communities. The results show 82% of people in Wales are overall generally satisfied with their lives.

The National Survey for Wales is a face-to-face survey of over 10,000 randomly-selected adults aged 16 and over, carried out across Wales. The results are used by the Welsh Government to help make Wales a better place to live.

The survey began in its original form in 2012. From 2016-17 onwards it replaces the Welsh Health Survey, the Arts in Wales Survey, the Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey and the Active Adults Survey.

Key results from the National Survey 2016-17 include:

- 90% were satisfied with their GP care, 91% were satisfied with the care they received at their last NHS appointment and 96% of hospital patients felt treated with dignity and respect.
- 90% of parents were satisfied with their child's primary school and 85% with their child's secondary school;
- 70% rated their experience of social care as either excellent or good;
- 66% were able to keep up with all bills and commitments without difficulty;
- 73% felt that people in their local area treated each other with respect and consideration;
- 48% feel optimistic about the future;
- 80% visited the outdoors in the last twelve months;
- 62% walk or cycle to get around; and
- 85% of people use the internet.

The survey for 2016-17 reveals people's views on how the Welsh Government is doing its job and their views on the health and education, where zero is 'extremely bad' and ten is 'extremely good'. The overall rating for the Welsh Government was 5.6, for health 6.2 and for education 6.2.

Welcoming the results, Finance and Local Government Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

"This new wide-ranging survey provides us with a fresh picture of public services and the experiences of people using them and their lives more generally.

"This survey has been taken against the backdrop of uncertainty following the Brexit referendum result and the UK Government's continued austerity programme.

"Despite this, the results published today show that people in Wales are generally satisfied with the public services that are so important to us all.

"We know there are difficult times to come with our public finances and we all need to prepare for these challenges. The findings of this survey are very timely and will help us all ensure we are able to deliver the world class services people rightly expect.

"Hearing the views of people across the country will help us make Wales an even better place to live, work and enjoy."

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## New proposals to strengthen health and care quality and governance in Wales

The proposals are part of a White Paper, Services Fit for the Future, Quality and Governance in Health and Care in Wales, published jointly by Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething and Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans.

The White Paper includes a number of proposals designed to support and encourage more integrated ways of working and better decision-making, putting the interests of people at the heart of service planning and delivery.

The proposals include common standards and joint complaints handling; better decision-making across health boards through a new Duty of Quality for the Population of Wales and a clearer process for service change; as well as further promoting a culture of openness in the health and social care system through a new Duty of Candour.

There are also proposals for strengthening the way the public is represented across health and social care, and for regulation and inspection.

The proposals set out in the White Paper are:

- strengthening leadership of Health Boards to promote stronger governance and leadership to ensure services are led, planned and developed in the way they need to be in the years to come
- the introduction a Duty of Quality for the Population of Wales which will focus on health boards working together to meet the needs of the population in the planning and delivery of quality healthcare services
- the joint investigations of complaints which span health and social care, irrespective of setting – this will involve requiring different organisations to work together to investigate complaints making it easier for people when their concern is about both health and social care services
- strengthening of the voice of citizens – this includes proposals to replace the current model of Community Health Councils with a new independent arrangements which would represent the interests of citizens across health and social care
- a clearer process for service change – introducing an independent mechanism to provide clinical advice on substantial service change decisions, with advice from the proposed new citizen voice body, which will encourage continuous engagement and increase the pace of strategic change
- improving inspection and regulation – including improving the legal framework for the inspection and regulation of health services and questions about whether a new independent body for patient voice and regulation and inspection should be established.

The White Paper builds on work already done following the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2014, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Services (Wales) Act 2016.

The Welsh Government will dovetail these proposals with the outcome of the Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care in Wales.

Launching the consultation, Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“In Wales, we are fortunate to enjoy some of the best health and social care services anywhere in the world, provided by committed staff at all levels. The well-respected OECD, in their report last year, commented favourably on our systems in Wales but also challenged us to do more to fulfil our potential of providing excellent person-centred care to all our citizens.

“The proposals we are publishing today will ensure our health and social care services are fit for the future. The White Paper looks at a number of key aspects of the health and care system and suggests some changes which we believe could make a real difference by putting people at the centre of service delivery. It will also enable health and social care organisations to work together and across boundaries to ensure they deliver the very best care for people across Wales.”

The consultation on the White Paper will run from 28 June until 29 September.