

Exercise to help your mental health



Exercise is the fast, fun and free way to boost your happiness and fight anxiety which is a leading factor in mental ill health.

That's the message from Edinburgh Leisure and NHS Lothian who are dedicated to raising awareness of the link between physical activity and mental health.

Edinburgh Leisure is hosting open sessions as part of NHS Lothian's Healthy Active Minds programme and will be offering information, free passes, fitness MOTs and answering questions.

The sessions are part of the planned activity for Mental Health Awareness Week, which is run by the Mental Health Foundation and will, this year, focus on anxiety following evidence that 1/3 of GP consultations are for mental health problems.

Healthy Active Minds is funded by NHS Lothian and is delivered with local health and community partners to ensure that participants with low mood, stress and anxiety get supported access to physical activity opportunities both within Edinburgh Leisure venues and their own community.

There is mounting evidence that physical activity is beneficial for people experiencing either mild or severe anxiety, according to the Mental Health Foundation.

Sheena Lowrie, Senior Health Promotion Specialist, NHS Lothian, said "Physical activity has a role in enhancing mental wellbeing by improving mood, reducing anxiety and

stress and enhancing self esteem.”



Healthy Active Minds will host stalls at Leith Victoria Swim Centre on Wednesday May 14th from 11.30 to 1pm and Meadowbank Sports Centre on Thursday May 15th from 12.30 to 2pm.

Conor McLean, Healthy Active Minds Assistant at Edinburgh Leisure, said: “Healthy Active Minds is such a rewarding project to work on. I meet a diverse span of people from a range of various backgrounds who are all willing to make a change.

“The difference in participants from when they first come for a consultation to when they are exiting the programme nine months later can be staggering.

“I see participants’ levels of confidence, mood, physical fitness and overall wellbeing develop massively.

“It is incredibly satisfying to play a small part in the process of helping someone make such a positive change in their life.”

Healthy Active Minds allows participants, who have been referred by their GP, access to a range of physical activities including walking, swimming, gym and fitness classes.

Now in its fifth year of funding, it’s currently Edinburgh Leisure’s biggest health referral programme receiving around 100 referrals per month.