

Chest
Heart &
Stroke

8 Week Couch to 5k Programme for workplaces

WORK
WELL

LIVE
WELL

Welcome

NI Chest Heart & Stroke (NICHHS) bespoke 8-week programme will help assist workplaces to support their employees to be more physically active by completing our Couch to 5k Programme. Couch to 5k is a widely recognised programme that takes people from their couch to running or jogging 5k.

Our Couch to 5k programme is different because it encourages people to do strengthening exercises on 2 days of the week to complement training. This will not only help you to walk, jog or run more easily but will also strengthen bone density, muscles and prevent injury. Our programme is also aimed at employees completing the programme together, to motivate and encourage each other. The dropout rate of Couch to 5k is 50% by week 3 so by completing it together, it will help keep colleagues motivated.

Almost 90%

of the income needed to fund our care and prevention services comes from public donations.

We need your support more than ever.

Why is physical activity important



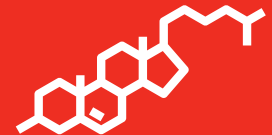
Decreases risk of musculoskeletal pain



Reduces risk of developing long term conditions, such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes



Reduces high blood pressure



Reduces cholesterol



Helps to maintain a healthy weight



Boosts immunity



Strengthens bones and muscles



Boosts mental health



Reduces stress



Helps to improve sleep

What is involved?

- There will be 2 sessions per week for a period of 8 weeks.
- Try and organise 2 set days with colleagues per week e.g. Tuesday and Thursday. This may be pre-organised with your workplace Health Champion.
- This can be completed before work, after work or at lunch time in small groups (in line with guidance) or on your own at a time that suits you.
- Each session gradually increases in time between walking and jogging.
- Avoid training two days in a row to allow for recovery.



How much physical activity do I actually need?



Before starting:

- Ensure you have been given the all clear from your GP if undertaking any new exercise if you have any medical conditions
- Please complete the pre-exercise health consent form provided by your Health Champion
- Wear comfortable clothing e.g. loose-fitting t-shirt and tracksuit bottoms/shorts and wear training shoes
- Keep hydrated and bring water with you
- Don't eat a heavy meal for at least 1.5 hours before taking part
- Ensure you have your inhaler with you if you have asthma
- Always warm up before starting each session
- Stop the session immediately if you experience any chest pains or are finding it difficult to speak
- Remember you are taking part at your own risk. Please be careful if you are wearing headphones, as this will limit hearing for any traffic or hazards
- Stick to the plan! It will gradually build up your fitness in a safe way.

Warm up exercises:

Warm up for 5 mins before each session to avoid injury and to increase the heart rate in a safe way and increase blood flow around the body.

1. Brisk walk for 1 min and then slow jog for 15 seconds and repeat
2. Then complete each exercise shown in images below for 20-30 seconds working both left and right sides of the body.



8-week training plan:

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Session 1	Session 3	Session 5	Session 7
Jog 60 secs Walk 90 secs (repeat 8 times) = 20 mins	Jog 90 secs Walk 90 secs (6 times) = 20 mins	Jog 2 mins Walk 90 secs Jog 2 mins Walk for 60 secs (repeat)	Jog 4 mins Walk 2 mins Jog 4 mins Walk 2 mins (repeat)
Session 2	Session 4	Session 6	Session 8
Jog 60 secs Walk 90 secs (repeat 8 times)	Jog 90 secs Walk 90 secs (6 times) = 20 mins	Jog 2 mins Walk 90 secs Jog 3 mins Walk 2.5 mins (repeat)	Jog 5 mins Walk 60 secs Jog 6 mins Walk 60 secs (repeat)
Complete!	Well done!	Keep going!	Stay strong!

Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Session 9	Session 11	Session 13	Session 15
Jog 10 mins Walk 60 secs (repeat)	Jog 18 mins Walk 2 mins	Jog 22 mins	Jog 30 mins (Allow 2 days recovery before completing the 5km)
Session 10	Session 12	Session 14	Session 16
Jog 15 mins Walk 2 mins Jog 5 mins	Jog 20 mins Walk 30 secs Jog 5 mins	Jog 25 mins	Complete your 5km! (attend a local parkrun if one nearby or choose your own route)
Over halfway!	Nearly there!	One more week!	Well done!

TOP TIP:
Screenshot this to your phone!

Strengthening exercises:

Remember to do 2 days a week of strengthening exercises to aid your training.

Benefits of strength training include:

- Maintaining muscle tissue
- Increased strength
- Improved bone health
- Controlled body fat
- Decreased risk of injury

Some examples of strengthening exercises you can try:

- Climbing Stairs
- Body Weight Squats
- Hill walking
- Cycling
- Doing another sport e.g. Football or Tennis
- Gardening, such as digging and shovelling
- Yoga or Pilates

For more ideas on strengthening exercises click [here](#).

Cool down and stretching

A cool down and stretching after activity is just as important as warming up. It helps to bring the heart rate gradually back down, reduces a buildup of lactic acid in the muscles and aids recovery. It also helps keep joints and movement supple and flexible.

- Please follow the stretches below and hold to your own point of tension for 25-30 seconds for each one and on each side of the body.
- Try not to bounce or 'bob' in the stretches, they should be carried out in a static or controlled way.



Torso Twists

Quad Stretches

Calf Stretch

Hamstring Stretch

Completing a 5k!

Getting involved in a local Parkrun is a great way to keep up your running as it's a FREE timed weekly event taking place across Northern Ireland. Adult Parkruns all take place on Saturdays at 9.30am. To find your local Parkrun and to register please [click here](#).

If you don't want to attend a Parkrun, one of the easiest ways to map out a 5km route is via Google Maps or by downloading a free running app on your phone. There are lots to choose from on both Android and Apple devices.

NICHS also organise their own 5k each year in February called the Red Dress Run: A great way to mix with other runners and support local people with a chest, heart or stroke condition. The Belfast City Marathon also offers a relay option and is a great way to get a group of colleagues together and raise money for a local charity. For more information on running events for charity [click here](#).

Remember to pace yourself, everyone jogs at different speeds and has different stride lengths so do what feels right for you. People walk or jog Parkruns or do a mix of both, as completing the distance is the main goal!



Ready to get started?

This initiative is led by your Health Champions in your workplace. In order to take part, let your Health Champion know you are interested or your Health Champion may circulate a sign-up sheet.

Ensure you complete a 'Pre Exercise Health Consent Form' provided to your Health Champion from NICHS. These can also be returned to your Health Champion before taking part.

Screen shot the training plan so you have it on your phone to keep it handy.

Try and not let the weather put you off. Wearing a few lighter layers rather than a bulky coat will help as you warm up.

As you start the programme buddying up with someone who jogs at a similar pace will help you stay on track and more motivated to keep going rather than training on your own. It is also a good way of getting to know others in your workplace who you maybe haven't spoken to before!

Good luck!

Chest Heart & Stroke

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