



## **Do you really need to pay to be active?**

**Welcome to PhysioBiz, with healthcare advice and information you can trust and rely on, brought to you by the South African Society of Physiotherapy!**

We don't need to tell you how important it is to be physically active, for the health of your heart, your metabolism – even for your brain! A recently published study found that “aerobic exercise for 2 minutes to 1 hour at moderate to high intensity improved attention, concentration, and learning and memory functions for up to 2 hours,” so that alone makes it worth doing.

But, well, Covid, right? Most of us have taken something of a knock financially over the last six or seven months. We may not be able to afford to pay for things like gym, dance classes or even new running shoes.

Fortunately, you don't need to cough up any money at all! Turn your housework into a work-out and you can tune up and tone up very nicely, thank you.

“Physical activity is defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that require energy expenditure,” the World Health Organisation tells us. “The term ‘physical activity’ should not be confused with ‘exercise’, which is a subcategory of physical activity that is planned, structured, repetitive, and aims to improve or maintain one or more components of physical fitness. Beyond exercise, any other physical activity that is done during leisure time, for transport to get to and from places, or as part of a person's work, has a health benefit.”

Some time ago, a kitchen company did some number-crunching on household activities. Translating calories into kilojoules, they estimated that “we spend 138 minutes every week mopping floors, which burns [nearly 1700 kJ]. This is equivalent of doing 340 squat thrusts, and you're being productive at the same time!” The magazine Good Housekeeping, which wrote about this, went on to say that

“Vacuuming comes in just behind mopping, with 132 minutes of vacuuming your home each week burning [just over 1600 kJ]. Doing laundry, ironing and putting away clothes can see you burn [nearly 3000 kJ] every week.” Adding that up means someone doing their own housework is doing over 300 minutes of light to moderate intensity physical activity a week – pretty good in terms of the recommendations accepted worldwide.

Tasks like gardening or tending a veggie plot are not shabby forms of exercise either. “Tasks using both upper and lower body (e.g., digging, fertilizing, weeding, raking, tying plants to stakes) required moderate-intensity physical activity; those using the upper body while standing or squatting (e.g., pruning, mixing soil, planting seedlings, sowing, watering using a watering can or hose, harvesting) were low-intensity physical activities; and tasks requiring limited use of the upper body while standing (e.g., filling containers with soil, washing harvested produce) were the least demanding physical activities of the gardening tasks tested.” (Hortscience Vol. 46(12) December 2011)

So as we head into summer, put away the Roomba, grab a broom or a shovel and start sweeping, mopping and digging vigorously! Just consult your physiotherapist if you do too many repetitious tasks and develop muscle or joint pain. Go at it with a good will, and the health benefits will soon show up – mentally as well as physically. Gardening is good for the soul, and so is a lovely clean house that you’ve freshened up yourself!

To find a physiotherapist, go to [www.saphysio.co.za](http://www.saphysio.co.za).

## References

[“Effects of a Single Exercise Workout on Memory and Learning Functions in Young Adults – a Systematic Review”](https://neurosciencenews.com/exercise-memory-learning-17013/?fbclid=IwAR2dJmmC4z58rJXpnD6eSLh26xW2Fh6stjZarQuxblwmmqdiHilj5MrI8vc) by Peter Blomstrand, Jan Engvall. Translational Sports Medicine. <https://neurosciencenews.com/exercise-memory-learning-17013/?fbclid=IwAR2dJmmC4z58rJXpnD6eSLh26xW2Fh6stjZarQuxblwmmqdiHilj5MrI8vc>

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