

# Australian Physical Activity Guidelines

For adults aged 60 years and older  
who experience mild changes to their memory

National and International experts have developed the following physical activity guidelines for older people with subjective cognitive decline (SCD) or mild cognitive impairment (MCI).

Both SCD and MCI are **health conditions** in which older people experience **changes in memory** or in other aspects of thinking. These changes are not severe enough to cause problems with basic day-to-day tasks and they are not the same as dementia.

Physical activity is an important lifestyle factor for protecting and improving brain function including for people with SCD and MCI.

More research is needed to explain why this is the case, but reasons may include that physical activity can release protective chemicals in the brain and can keep blood vessels in the brain healthy. Regular physical activity can also improve:



and with this help maintain independence in daily living activities.

## Recommendations

People with SCD or MCI should:

**aerobic  
physical  
activity**

1. Aim to do at least 150 minutes per week of moderate physical activity (30 minutes per day on 5 days per week) or at least 90 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic physical activity (see next page for definitions). This should be combined with trying to be physically active during daily tasks.

**resistance  
training**

2. Perform additional progressive resistance training activities (also known as strength training) at least twice a week. This should also be combined with daily tasks which help with improving muscle strength.

**balance  
activities**

3. Undertake activities that help to improve or maintain balance and reduce the risk of falls.

**talk  
to your GP**

4. Talk to a general practitioner (or physiotherapist or exercise physiologist) before changing your physical activity routine to ensure that the physical activity plan is safe and takes medical history into account.

## Types of physical activity

### MODERATE AEROBIC

**Moderate aerobic** physical activities are of an intensity that one starts to sweat and needs to breathe a bit harder.

#### EXAMPLES

> brisk walking, bicycling

### VIGOROUS AEROBIC

**Vigorous aerobic** activities will cause sweating and feeling "out of breath", so that it would be hard to hold a conversation at the same time.

#### EXAMPLES

> running, faster swimming, aerobics in the gym

### PROGRESSIVE RESISTANCE TRAINING

**Progressive resistance training** (another name is strength training) uses resistance (e.g. weights or body weight) to cause muscles to contract. This, in turn, builds strength of skeletal muscles, tendons, ligaments and bones.

#### EXAMPLES

> chair stands (sitting in a chair and getting up and down without the use of hands), using weights, weight machines or a rubber band to induce resistance



### BALANCE

**Balance exercises** help to improve balance and reduce the risk of falls.

#### EXAMPLES

> walking heel to toe, rocking onto heels and toes (ensure safety by doing, exercises near a table or chair)

### DAILY TASKS

**Daily tasks** can also involve engaging in physical activity without specifically setting out to exercise.

#### EXAMPLES

> using stairs, walking to the shop or transport stations, household tasks, gardening

## Tips to get started & keep going!

- > **See your GP** or another health professional, such as a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist, if you have safety concerns or existing medical problems. You should still be able to participate in many types of physical activity
- > Moderate physical activity is generally considered to be safe. **Start low and go slow** (suddenly starting vigorous exercise or going too fast can cause injuries)
- > Try to **think of a type of physical activity you might enjoy doing**. Going for walks is often a good start
- > Make it **fun & social!** Arrange activities with your friends or join a group in which you can meet new friends
- > **Keep a diary** of your physical activity or use a calendar to track your progress and help remind you when you had planned to do it
- > If you join a group or a gym, ask the trainers for **written handouts about the exercises** they recommend or you like- this will help you remember them correctly when you return
- > Make sure you have **comfortable and well fitting footwear and clothing**. If something feels uncomfortable or painful, you should seek advice from a professional as simple adjustments may help



**Make a start  
TODAY!**

Any amount of  
physical activity is a  
good start and you can  
slowly build it up