

# GET MOVING!

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR OLDER PEOPLE

### WHAT IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Just moving!

Physical activity is any movement made by skeletal muscles in your body that uses energy. This includes any incidental activity you might do during the day like doing the housework, and any planned physical activity, like exercise.

### WHAT ARE THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Feeling better!

Research shows that doing regular physical activity has lots of benefits for your physical and mental health.

#### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HELPS YOU TO:

- // Sleep well
- // Reduce stress and anxiety
- // Re-energise
- // Help manage your weight
- // Support joint, muscle and bone health
- // Improve flexibility and mobility
- // Prevent falls and injury

#### ALSO, YOU ARE LESS LIKELY TO DEVELOP:

- // Diabetes
- // Stroke
- // High blood pressure
- // High cholesterol
- // Heart disease
- // Some cancers
- // Depression
- // Premature death

And best of all, physical activity improves your overall wellbeing.

### HOW DOES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SUPPORT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH?

It makes your brain stronger!

Studies show that physical activity supports the brain, which helps to strengthen brain functioning.

Many people don't realise that there are 600km of blood vessels in the brain.

### SO REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HELPS TO:

- // Keep all your blood vessels healthy
- // Add to the growth and survival of brain cells
- // Improve cognitive function - that is your perception, thinking, reasoning and remembering skills.

### CAN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY REDUCE MY RISK OF COGNITIVE DECLINE?

Yes, it can!

We need more research, but what we know now suggests that people who are physically active may experience less cognitive decline, and have a lowered risk of developing dementia when compared to people who aren't physically active. Also, a combination of aerobic exercise and strength training may have a larger effect on cognitive health in older people than just doing one of these options alone.

- // Aerobic exercise includes moderate-to-high intensity physical activities that increase your heart and breathing rate, like taking a brisk walk, or doing something that makes you a little out of breath. This generally means that whatever you are doing will make it mildly difficult to chat to your companion while you exercise
- // Strength training includes physical activities that use weights or resistance, which help to strengthen your muscles, and support bone and joint health.

### HOW DO I GET STARTED?

By going carefully, with intent!

Starting a physical activity program will be different for everyone. So it is important that you talk to your GP and an exercise professional like a physiotherapist before you start a program. You should discuss your current health, fitness levels, and goals with them. If you can't do certain things because of your existing health, then discuss these too, and find out which activities are best for you.

### HOW MUCH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DO I NEED TO DO?

Surprisingly, not as much as you might think!

The Australian Government Department of Health recommends:

- // Participation in at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity like brisk walking, on most (if not all) days, or
- // Vigorous activity for 75-150 minutes each week.

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If you can't do 30 minutes a day, start exercising for 10 minutes at a time, once or twice a day, and increase the level (try 12 mins twice a day) until you have reached your goal. Remember: doing something is better than doing nothing. Your aim is to reduce the amount of time you spend sitting or lying down.

### TIPS TO STAY MOTIVATED!

- // Do something that you enjoy - walking, jogging, tai chi, yoga, dancing, golf, tennis, cycling, swimming - anything that moves your body and gives you pleasure
- // Set realistic goals that you can reach
- // Don't push yourself too hard - slowly build up your physical activity level and ask your GP or an exercise professional for a plan to do this
- // Include a couple of friends or relatives in your exercise - daily social interaction is good for your brain too
- // Look for 'active' options in your day; for example, walk to the local shops to pick up your newspaper or a carton of milk – a brisk walk to the local café to meet friends or relatives for a cuppa is always a good idea
- // Do as much as you can with family or friends
- // Remind yourself to do something every day – maybe a prompt on your mobile phone, or a note in your diary will do the trick
- // Dress and exercise for the weather
- // Keep hydrated by monitoring your water intake.
- // Have a stretch before and after you do anything physical - your physiotherapist or fitness professional will show you how to do this

### WHERE CAN I FIND MORE

### INFORMATION?

**The National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australians:**  
<http://health.gov.au>

**Your Brain Matters (Alzheimer's Australia):**  
[www.yourbrainmatters.org.au](http://www.yourbrainmatters.org.au)

**Your Local Council** can provide you with information regarding local exercise programs, (many specifically designed for older people) as well as local community sports clubs.

**The Healthy Ageing Quiz,**  
(National Ageing Research Institute):  
<http://www.nari.net.au/resources/health-professionals/healthy-ageing>

The **ANU-ADRI** (Centre for Research on Ageing, Health & Wellbeing): <http://anuadri.anu.edu.au>

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