

The benefits of being active

Regular activity will help:

- Your heart and lungs work more efficiently.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Strengthen your muscles and bones.
- Improve your flexibility, balance and bones.
- Improves your posture.
- Help to maintain your mobility and independence.
- Help you cope with everyday tasks.
- Help you relax, sleep and cope with concerns.worries,
- Get out and meet new friends thus preventing loneliness.
- Give you a sense of achievement.

And most importantly, do the things you want to do!



Consult with your doctor before beginning any form of exercise

If you are enjoying good health and do not suffer from heart problems, pains in the chest, joint or bone problems, then you can gradually build more activity into your daily routine.

However, it is advised that you should always check with your doctor before starting any form of exercise, especially if you have been inactive for some time or if you have had an illness.

Getting started

This may seem like a big change but here are some ideas to help you get started and take one step at a time:

- Choose things you like to do, find out whether you have a seniors club near to you, this is a good way of getting started. Talk to other seniors and check what is available.
- Build physical activity into your daily routine. It is advised that you start any new activity slowly and progress at your own pace. Do not feel pressurized to do too much too soon.
- If you do not have a seniors' club near to you, ask a friend to join you. This will also make it fun as you are doing the exercises with somebody you know.
- Do not feel bad if you've missed a day, set realistic and achievable goals. Be flexible, remember, it should not become a chore!

- Vary the activities you do, this will help maintain your interest.
- In warmer weather, you may want to get out and about more, when it's colder you may want to be more active around the house.
- Try activities that will help improve strength, mobility, balance and co-ordination.

How do I know that physical activity or exercise is right for me?

The majority of people can benefit from physical activity – whatever your age or condition. In fact, the greatest benefits are gained by inactive people who start to take part in regular physical activity. You will note the difference as soon as you begin.

You do not need to buy new or expensive clothing, just wear loose, comfortable clothes and a pair of flat heeled shoes which will provide the best support.

Do not take part if you are tired, unwell or have just eaten.

Always warm up thoroughly by gradually easing your body into activity for the first few minutes.

If you can talk to someone else while being active – you are working at the right level.

If you are experiencing pain or discomfort – stop straight away and consult your doctor.

Most common concerns and questions

There are many reasons why we find it hard to be active, do these sound familiar to you?

I'm too busy – I don't have the time

You don't need to set aside "special time". Activity can quite easily be introduced as part of your daily routine. Try getting off the bus a few stops earlier, use the stairs instead of lift or escalator or walk to the local shops.

I'm not the sporty type

You don't need to be good at sport. There are many different activities like walking, dancing and gardening that can help you be active.

I might overdo it and hurt myself

To be of benefit, activity doesn't need to be vigorous. Taking up moderate activity and building up gradually is the way to progress.

I'm too old

You are never too old to feel the benefits of healthy activity. If you've been inactive for some time, you will still feel the benefits. Take up a new activity but start gently.

It's too expensive

You don't have to buy special clothes or equipment, walking is the best activity and it's free! If you do want to join a group or class, check for special rates or offers.

I'm not sure how much exercise I should do

You don't have to spend hours – just 30 minutes a day of moderate activity such as brisk walking is all it takes to feel the difference.

This might sound like a lot to begin with, so try building up – step by step – from a few minutes at a time. The important thing is that you start from "where you are" and build up gradually.

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