Ageing with vitality: Your everyday guide to healthy active living
Ageing with vitality: Your everyday guide to healthy active living
Introduction

Using this book
Australia’s Physical Activity Recommendations for Older Adults

1 Get ready

Physical activity benefits
What’s the difference between physical activity and exercise?
Why is physical activity such a big deal?
What sort of physical activity should I be doing?
  • Strength
  • Balance
  • Flexibility
  • Endurance

2 Get set

Identifying your starting point
Quitting smoking
Setting your goals
Writing a plan
Being safe
  • Getting the right shoes
  • Walking safely when out and about
  • Preventing injury
Finding a fitness professional

3 Go!

Four keys to success
  1. Include physical activity in your everyday life
  2. Try all four types of physical activity
  3. Plan for breaks in your routine (life happens!)
  4. Build up the benefits
## Sample exercises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to improve your strength</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to improve your balance</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to improve your flexibility</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to improve your endurance</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## How am I doing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>78</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test yourself</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ways to measure progress</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Healthy eating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>82</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tips for healthy eating</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking enough fluids</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing your alcohol intake</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating out</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy snacks</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary supplements</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Conclusion

| A final word   | 88 |

Please use the workbook inserted at the back of this guide to plan your physical activity and chart your progress.
Welcome! Like most people, you've probably heard that physical activity is good for you. Our bodies are designed to be used and this becomes even more important as we get older.

If you're already active, keep up the good work. It may even be time to push yourself a little harder, try a new activity, or add more physical activity to your daily life. If you have stopped being active for some reason, let us help you get started again and keep going. If you're not very physically active now, it's never too late to start. This guide to healthy active living has something for everyone. This guide supports the Queensland Government's Positively Ageless Strategy.

A special note
It is recommended that you talk with your doctor or health professional if you aren't used to energetic activity, are planning to significantly increase your physical activity or want to start a vigorous activity program. You should also talk with your doctor if you have any existing conditions or health problems. Your doctor or health professional can help you choose activities that are best for you and reduce any risks.

This guide has been adapted with permission from the United States of America resource Exercise and Physical Activity: Your Everyday Guide from the National Institute on Ageing to include the latest evidence and recommendations from Australia. This guide builds on an Australian Government booklet Choose Health: Be Active by giving specific exercises to keep you healthy.
Using this book
This guide can help you take charge of your health by being active. You may want to read through the entire book first and then keep it handy so you can refer to the sample exercises and use the charts in the workbook to record your activities. You may want to start at the chapter that is most relevant to you. Throughout the guide, you’ll find personal stories we hope will inspire you to be more active every day.

Chapter 1: Get ready talks about the ‘why’ of exercise and physical activity. It tells you the benefits of being active and describes the different types of exercise.

Chapter 2: Get set guides you on getting organised and reviewing your current activity levels, setting short and long-term goals, and creating a realistic plan for becoming active over time.

Chapter 3: Go! is all about the ‘how’. The guide offers tips to help you get started. It also has ideas to help you stick with your decision to be active every day and to get you back on track if you have to stop exercising for some reason.

Chapter 4: Sample exercises gives you some specific physical activities to increase your strength, improve balance, become more flexible and increase endurance. All the exercises have easy directions to help you do them safely.

Chapter 5: How am I doing? offers you some ways to test your progress and reward your success.

Chapter 6: Healthy eating briefly discusses another key to good health — nutritious eating habits.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Workbook: A separate booklet includes worksheets and ideas to help you plan, record your activity, keep track of your progress and stay motivated. You'll also find answers to frequently asked questions about physical activity for older adults and a list of resources for more information. Some of the resources will be useful for people with specific health problems or disabilities who want to be active.
**Australia’s physical activity recommendations for older adults**

The Australian Government has introduced physical activity recommendations specifically for older Australians. This guide will help you to build these recommendations into your everyday life so you can stay fit and healthy as you get older.

1. **Older adults should do some form of physical activity, no matter what their age, weight, health problems or abilities.** Even a slight increase in your daily activity can make a difference to your health and wellbeing. Existing health problems shouldn’t stop you from being physically active every day — activities can be adjusted. It’s never too late.

2. **Older adults should be active every day in as many ways as possible, doing a range of physical activities that incorporate fitness (endurance), strength, balance and flexibility.** The range of health benefits achieved is likely to be greater with a mixed range of physical activities.

3. **Older adults should accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days.** The effects of physical activity are cumulative so you can still achieve health benefits by doing three 10-minute periods of physical activity in one day.

4. **Older adults who have stopped physical activity, or who are starting a new physical activity, should start at a level that is manageable and gradually build up the recommended amount, type and frequency of activity.** Even a break of two or three weeks can mean that you need to gradually build up the intensity again. If you experience any severe or uncomfortable pain, dizziness, palpitations or chest pain during physical activity, stop the activity and discuss with a doctor or health professional.

5. **Older adults who continue to enjoy a lifetime of vigorous physical activity should carry on doing so into later life in a manner suited to their capability, provided recommended safety procedures and guidelines are adhered to.** Generally, higher levels of physical activity are associated with greater health outcomes. You may be able to gradually progress to vigorous physical activity over time — talk with your doctor or health professional before commencing a new form of vigorous activity.

You can learn more about the physical activity guidelines by contacting the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing at www.health.gov.au.
Get ready
Today, we know a lot about the need to be physically active as we get older. Regardless of health and physical abilities, older adults can really benefit by staying physically active. Even if you have difficulty standing or walking, you can still be active and benefit. In fact, in most cases, you have more to lose by not doing anything.

Physical activity benefits every area of your life.

It makes you look and feel better. It:
- gives you more energy
- helps you sleep better
- helps you to relax
- helps you to meet people or catch up with friends
- is fun
- tones your body
- helps you stay on your feet and maintain your independence.

It is good for your mind. It:
- reduces stress and anxiety
- improves concentration
- improves self-confidence
- reduces feelings of sadness.

It is good for your body because it:
- helps to control:
  — weight (and reduce body fat)
  — blood pressure
  — cholesterol
  — diabetes
  — bone and joint problems (for example, arthritis)
- reduces the risk of:
  — heart disease
  — stroke
  — some cancers
- helps to manage pain
- helps to maintain and increase joint movement
- helps to prevent falls and injury.

As you’ve probably noticed, the key word is you. The benefits you gain from physical activity will depend on your starting point and how much effort you put into it. You’ll need to match your physical activity to your own needs and abilities. For example, some people can swim a few kilometres without thinking twice about it. For others, a slow walk to the corner and back is a big achievement. Physical activity is good for everybody and there are so many great ways to be active!
Both terms refer to the voluntary movements you do that burn kilojoules. Physical activities get your body moving and include everyday activities, such as walking to the shop or gardening, through to a wide range of organised activities, such as exercise classes and sporting activities. Exercise often refers to a physical activity that is specifically planned, structured and repetitive, such as strength training, tai chi or an aerobics class.

Physical activity and exercise are both important and can help improve your ability to do the everyday activities you enjoy. Use this guide to incorporate physical activity into your daily routine to help you get your 30 minutes of physical activity a day.

The bottom line? There are many ways to be active every day. Find something active you enjoy doing, include it in your regular routine and try to increase your level of activity over time.

What's the difference between physical activity and exercise?

Make it a priority

Being active and exercising regularly can change your life. See how Betty has benefited from regular physical activity:

‘At age 67, I'm in the best physical condition of my life. Two years ago, I joined a low-impact aerobics class at a nearby senior citizens centre. The entire routine is done to music and is planned and led by an instructor. My balance has improved greatly and my osteoporosis has remained stable. Now, I want to do more so I regularly go walking with my friends to keep me moving between classes.’
Why is physical activity such a big deal?

Regular physical activity is important to the physical and mental health of almost everyone, including older adults. Being physically active can help you continue to do the things you enjoy and stay independent as you age. Regular physical activity over long periods of time can produce long-term health benefits. That’s why health experts say that older adults should be active every day to maintain their health.

In addition, regular physical activity can reduce the risk of developing some diseases and disabilities that develop as people grow older. In some cases, physical activity is an effective treatment for many chronic conditions. For example, studies show that people with arthritis, heart disease or diabetes benefit from regular activity. Physical activity also helps people who have high blood pressure, depression, balance problems or difficulty walking. Regular physical activity can help reduce your risk of injury from falls.

One of the great things about physical activity is that there are so many ways to be active. For example, you can be active in short spurts throughout the day, or you can set aside specific times of the day to be active. Many physical activities — such as brisk walking, raking leaves or safely taking the stairs whenever you can — are free or low cost and do not require special equipment. You could also borrow an exercise video or DVD from the library, visit your local gym or see what physical activities are on at a senior citizens centre or local park.

This guide shows you many ways to be physically active. It also has plenty of tips to help you be active in ways that suit your lifestyle, interests, health and budget; whether you’re just starting out, getting back to exercising after a break or fit enough to run 10 kilometres. It’s for everyone — people who are healthy and those who live with an ongoing health problem or disability.

Go here for more information

For many people, real life — things like illness, travelling, or an unexpected event — can get in the way of being active. See page 26 for tips on how to deal with breaks in your physical activity routine.
Make it fun

Having fun and socialising are major reasons active people give when asked why they are physically active. Carol can show you how:

‘I started playing tennis 42 years ago for pleasure. After moving north to warmer weather, I started playing year round. I play with friends every weekend, both singles and doubles. After tennis, we socialise over a few healthy snacks. That’s the best part of our get-together. At age 68, I’m the oldest in the group; the youngest is 16. I love the game and hope to play forever.’

Quick tip

When outdoors, be sure to use SPF30+ sunscreen and reapply every two hours. Also, wear wrap-around sunglasses, protective clothing and a broad-brimmed hat. Seek shade whenever possible.

Make it interesting

There are many ways to be active. For Pat, age 56, gardening is one regular activity that keeps her active:

‘I know some people think gardening isn’t really physical activity, but I’m here to say, “Are they kidding?” Not only am I exercising my imagination when I pore over plant catalogues to pick out seeds for the garden, but working in my garden means bending and lifting, moving and stretching not to mention digging and hauling!

Anyone who’s ever had a garden knows that shovelling compost, lifting 10-kilogram bags of mulch, transplanting seedlings, dividing plants and pulling weeds are serious physical activities.

For avid gardeners, there’s always something to do — from planting and weeding to raking and cleanup. It keeps a body moving!’
What sort of physical activity should I be doing?
Four types of activity are needed to keep you healthy: strength, balance, flexibility and endurance. Although we describe them separately, some activities fit into several categories. For example, many endurance activities also help build strength, and strength exercises can help improve balance.

Endurance
Endurance or aerobic exercises increase your breathing and heart rate. These activities help to keep you healthy, improve your fitness and do the tasks you need to do every day. Endurance exercises improve the health of your heart, lungs and circulatory system. They also delay or prevent many diseases that are common in older adults, such as diabetes, colon and breast cancers, heart disease and others. Physical activities that build endurance include:

- brisk walking
- dancing
- swimming
- playing sport
- gardening (mowing, raking)
- jogging
- cycling
- safely climbing stairs or hills

Balance
Activities to improve balance help prevent falls, a common problem in older adults. Many lower-body strength exercises will also improve your balance. Exercises to improve your balance include:

- standing on one foot (see page 52)
- heel-to-toe walk (see page 54)
- tai chi.

Flexibility
Stretching can help your body stay flexible and limber, which gives you more freedom of movement for your regular physical activity as well as for your everyday activities. To increase your flexibility, try:

- shoulder and upper arm stretch (see page 62)
- calf stretch (see page 71)
- yoga
- tai chi.

Strength
Even small increases in muscle strength can make a big difference in your ability to stay independent and carry out everyday activities such as climbing stairs and carrying shopping bags. Some people call using weight to improve your muscle strength ‘strength training’ or ‘resistance training’. Strength exercises include:

- working with a resistance band (see page 34)
- working with weights (see page 35)
- wall push-ups (see page 36).

Go here for more information
Chapter 4, beginning on page 29, shows you how to do the exercises mentioned on this page and many others.