



Stay active and stay independent

Our bodies are designed to be used and this becomes even more important as we get older. Being physically active is essential for health and wellbeing and will also help you to stay independent.

Stay independent by being active and improving your strength and balance.

Essential elements of physical activity include strength, balance and reflexes. While age can affect your strength and balance, this can be improved by regular exercise on most days of the week. It's never too late to start.

To improve your level of physical activity, get professional help to design a program specific to your needs. If you have been inactive for a while, or have a health condition, check with your doctor before you begin.

How active are you?

I do less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week

Yes No

Moderate physical activity increases your heart rate and breathing and may include sporting activities, brisk walking, swimming, cycling or group exercise.

If you answered 'Yes'

For overall health and wellbeing, it is advisable to do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week – preferably every day. This can be split into three lots of ten minutes.

How steady are you?

I do less than two sessions of balance and strength exercises per week

Yes No

Balance and strength exercises could include Tai Chi, yoga, dancing or a specific program provided by a health or exercise professional.

If you answered 'Yes'

Balance exercises have been shown to be vital to reduce falls, so try to include balance and strength exercises in your physical activity routine at least twice a week. You could attend a Tai Chi or yoga class or obtain professionally prescribed exercises from a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist.

I feel unsteady when walking or I become unsteady when I turn around

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Talk to your doctor about what might cause you to feel unsteady. You can have a balance assessment to help identify the cause/s of your unsteadiness. You can ask your health professional to suggest exercises that will strengthen your thigh and bottom muscles and improve your balance.

I find it difficult to get up from a chair

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

This can be a sign of decreased leg muscle strength. Talk to a health professional about exercises that strengthen leg muscles. Ask if you need a more detailed assessment.

Do you have a plan for your physical activity?

I have not discussed physical activity with a health professional in the last 12 months

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

It is advisable for older adults to:

- › discuss physical activity with a health professional at least once a year
- › have a plan for physical activity which aims to improve your strength and balance and is tailored to suit you – use the Ageing and Vitality Guide and Workbook. This plan should aim to increase your level of activity gradually over time.

Tips to improve strength and balance to stay independent

- › Choose activities that reduce the risk of falling by helping to improve strength and balance. Ideal activities are group exercise programs that include strength and balance, such as Tai Chi, yoga or a program that best suits your needs designed by a health or exercise professional.
- › Discuss a tailored physical activity plan with your health professional every year. This plan outlines your intended level of physical activity and how this will be achieved.
- › To be effective, your physical activity needs to gradually become more challenging. Be active on most days of the week and include balance exercises at least twice every week.
- › Consider what shoes are appropriate for the activities you do (for further information, see footwear section on page 11).

Who can help?

- › Doctor
- › Exercise physiologist
- › Fitness instructors
- › General practice nurse
- › Occupational therapist
- › Physiotherapist

What physical activity options are available?

There may already be activities available in your local area. You can find out about these activities by contacting your local council. For example, some programs operating in parts of Queensland include:

- › Tai Chi/Tai Chi for Arthritis
- › Steady Steps
- › Older and Bolder
- › 60 and Better
- › Yoga.

Many more activity options are available and can be found on the Parks and Forest, Department of Environment and Science website and 60 and Better Program (details available on page 38–39).

My Aged Care and Carer Gateway provide free and confidential information on community aged care, disability and other support services across Australia (details available on page 38).

For further information on how to Stay On Your Feet®, visit:

- › Queensland Stay on Your Feet® at: www.health.qld.gov.au/stayonyourfeet

I plan to take action by...

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