

Physical activity— what are the benefits for me?

Physical activity is any movement of the body.

Exercise is physical activity with a specific intensity and duration to improve or maintain fitness.

Doing a combination of both can help you achieve these benefits.



Physical health

- ✓ Feel stronger and more energetic.
- ✓ Prevent and manage many health problems that may come with age.
- ✓ Maintain and improve brain health and a healthy weight.

Mental health

- ✓ Improve the amount and quality of your sleep.
- ✓ Manage stress and improve your mental health.
- ✓ Improve your feeling of wellbeing.

Lifestyle

- ✓ Maintain your mobility and independence.
- ✓ Reduce your risk of falling — maintain or improve your balance.
- ✓ Continue to enjoy your leisure activities.

Is it safe for me to be physically active?



Yes, at any age and ability!

You can start being physically active at any age — even if you've never been physically active, or if you've stopped.

You can customize your plan for your specific health status and abilities.



Get professional advice if you need it

If you are generally healthy, you can do light-to-moderate activities on your own.

If any of the following apply, talk to your doctor or health care provider:

- You have not exercised in a long time AND plan to start doing strenuous physical activities.
- You are on medications or have any significant health concerns.
- You are still recovering from a recent surgery.
- You have a history of falls or lose your balance easily.

Not sure when to seek more advice? Complete the [Get Active Questionnaire](#) (see page 4) to get a better idea.

What activities should I do?

Follow the Guidelines. This brochure reflects the *Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults (65+ years)*. For benefits to your health and functional abilities, include a range of activities and intensities within these recommendations.

Types of Activities		The Benefits
Aerobic Activities	Accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week. Moderate intensity – You can chat easily Vigorous intensity – You cannot chat easily	Keeps your heart, lungs, and blood vessels healthy. Can help you do housework more easily. More is better!
	<i>Walking briskly, walking up hills or stairs; hiking, cycling, swimming, tennis, dance class, pickleball.</i>	
Muscle Strength and Power Activities	Add activities using all your major muscle groups, 2–3 days a week. To strengthen muscles, pick a weight that you can lift, pull, or push 6-10 times. For muscle power, use a lighter weight you can do 8-10 times but at a faster but controlled speed.	Makes muscles stronger. Helps bones maintain strength. Helps to lift heavy luggage or do heavy garden work.
	<i>Free weights, rubber bands, your own body weight, join a fitness centre for more options.</i>	
Balancing Activities	Do activities that challenge you to keep upright. These activities can be done daily, more is better when trying to improve balance.	Helps maintain or improve your balance while standing or moving. Helps prevent a fall. Helps to reach a high shelf.
	<i>Walking on your tiptoes, doing Tai Chi. Look for videos on how to do balance exercises.</i>	
Flexibility Activities	Activities where you reach, bend and move through comfortable motions. Do daily.	Helps your body move more easily, and in new ways.
	<i>Stretching routines, yoga, Qigong, Pilates ... Do a variety of activities to include your whole body.</i>	
Sedentary Behaviour	Limit to 8 hours or less. Break up sedentary time as much as you can and limit recreational screen time to less than 3 hours per day.	

Tips toward success		
Dress for the conditions and the activity	In cold temperatures, dress in layers. Avoid exercising in hot, humid conditions. Wear proper footwear.	As we get older, we may not feel the air temperature adequately. You are more susceptible to cold injuries like frostbite or dehydration in humid conditions.
Warm up and cool down	Do warm-up activities before you start. Cool down before stopping – gradually decrease the intensity of your activity.	Prepare your heart, lungs, and muscles to prevent injuries. Cool down to gradually get your breathing and heart rate back to normal.
Move carefully	Change positions slowly, like getting up from the floor or picking up weights. Avoid activities that require fast changes in position.	As we get older, we can get dizzy from getting up quickly. This increases your risk of falls and injury.
Breathe!	Don't hold your breath.	When using weights, breathe out as you push or pull, and breathe in as you relax.
Stay hydrated	Drink water before, during and after. Don't wait until you feel very thirsty.	As we get older, we may not feel as thirsty when we first need water.
Understand your health conditions and medications	Consult your health care provider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ if you have more than one medical condition ▪ if you are taking several medications to manage conditions. 	You may need advice on how to manage your medications, symptoms, or diet when you engage in physical activity.

If you experience discomfort during the activity:

- ✓ Slow down to a more comfortable pace or stop the activity.
- ✓ If you need help to move or to get home, ask for it.

STOP or reduce your activity

if you have any these symptoms, during or following the activity:

- You feel dizzy, light-headed or weak
- You have chest pain or unusual shortness of breath
- You have new pain or swelling that stops the activity

If the symptoms persist, consult a health care provider.

How can I best plan for success?

Get motivated

Consider how physical activity can improve your health and lifestyle

Try to make physical activity a priority and the positive outcomes will follow.



Set goals

Set goals and imagine yourself reaching them

Make a plan and record your progress

Ask your family and friends to help keep you on track

What is important for you?

- Becoming stronger?
- Lowering blood pressure?
- Controlling blood sugar?
- Reducing anxiety?

Already active?

Keep it up!

Make sure you are doing the four different types of activity.

Try a new activity or push a little harder.

Choose what works for you

Select an activity and intensity that is right for you

You can be active on your own or with family and friends

You can be active outside or inside

Learn about different exercises and how to do them properly and safely.

The more you know about how to exercise the more confidence you will have.

Pace yourself

Start off slowly and build up gradually

Challenge yourself but listen to your body

As you get used to the activities, add a few extra minutes or increase the intensity.

Any minor discomfort should go away as you get used to the activities.

If you are very tired or sore during or after an activity, consider changing it.

Consulting a qualified exercise professional to help you begin exercising is a great investment! Exercise professionals who have training in working with older adults can identify age and health issues and can provide a tailored plan so you can be physically active safely and effectively!

Make a Start Today!

Staying active is the best medicine
for aging well.

For more information:

Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines: <https://csepguidelines.ca/>

CSEP's Get Active Questionnaire: <https://store.csep.ca/pages/getactivequestionnaire>

Visit the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) website to find a qualified exercise professional such as a CSEP Clinical Exercise Physiologist™ (CSEP-CEP) or a CSEP Certified Personal Trainer® (CSEP-CPT): <https://csep.ca/>

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