

Physical Activity for Older People (aged 65 years and over)

Physical activity has many health benefits. Regular physical activity:

- > increases muscle strength, flexibility, balance and coordination
- > helps to reduce the risk of premature death
- > helps to reduce the risk of falls
- > helps to prevent and manage health conditions like stroke, heart disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, osteoarthritis, certain cancers, obesity and depression
- > enhances sleep, wellbeing and quality of life
- > increases social interaction.

Spend more time being physically active and less time sitting down

Daily activities such as housework and washing the car are great as they help get you up and moving, contribute to your overall physical activity and reduce the time you are sitting down. Even small amounts of physical activity can have positive benefits on your health.

Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity that makes your breathing and heart rate increase (aerobic activity), five days a week.

Moderate

Moderate-intensity activities cause a slight but noticeable increase in breathing and heart rate. You can chat during moderate-intensity activity.

Vigorous

Vigorous-intensity activities significantly raise breathing and heart rate. You are not able to chat during vigorous-intensity activity.



Aerobic activities that benefit older people

Moderate-intensity aerobic activities

Cycling	Golf
Brisk walking	Housework
Kapa haka	Kaumātua line dancing
Stair climbing	Swimming
Walking	Playing with grandchildren
Waka ama	Water aerobics

Vigorous-intensity aerobic activities

Walking uphill
Heavy digging
Fast lane swimming
Cycling (more than 16 km/h)
Fast dancing



Speak to your doctor before starting or increasing physical activity

To reduce the risk of injury, older adults who are physically inactive or sedentary or who have one or more health conditions should seek advice from an appropriate health practitioner before starting or increasing levels of activity.

Start off slowly and build up to the recommended daily physical activity levels

Aim to do three sessions of flexibility and balance activities, and two sessions of resistance activities per week.

Resistance activities	Flexibility activities	Balance activities
Carrying shopping	Ankle stretches	Bowls
Chair raises	Bowls	Chair raises
Cycling	Gardening	Cycling (less than 14 km/h)
Golf	Golf	Golf
Hill walking	Housework	Modified tai chi
Knee lifts	Kilikiti	Otago Exercise Programme
Modified tai chi	Modified tai chi	Petanque (French bowls)
Stair climbing	Otago Exercise Programme	Pilates
Swimming	Petanque	Poi toa
Waka ama	Pilates	Social dancing
Water aerobics	Stretching	Standing on one leg
Weight training	Washing the car	Waka ama
	Yoga	Yoga



Recommendations for older people who are frail

- > Limit sedentary behaviour and be as physically active as possible.
- > Consult an appropriate health practitioner before starting or increasing physical activity.
- > Start off slowly and build up to recommended physical activity levels.
- > Consult an appropriate health practitioner before starting or increasing physical activity.
- > Aim for a mixture of low-impact aerobic, resistance, balance and flexibility activities.
- > Talk to your doctor about whether vitamin D tablets are beneficial



Be active safely

- > Wear appropriate clothing and footwear.
- > Wear hats and sunscreen outdoors in the summer.
- > Use safety equipment such as bike helmets.
- > Choose safe environments such as well-lit streets, open parks and indoor facilities.
- > Make sensible choices about when and where to be active and who to be active with.

Websites

New Zealand physical activity guidelines

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/physical-activity

Green Prescriptions

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/physical-activity/green-prescriptions

Obesity www.health.govt.nz/yourhealth-topics/obesity

Food and Nutrition Guidelines

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/nutrition/food-and-nutrition-guidelines

Health Education www.healthed.govt.nz/home

World Health Organization www.who.int/en

Active Smart <https://activesmart.co.nz>

Sport New Zealand www.sportnz.org.nz

Agencies for Nutrition Action www.ana.org.nz

The Heart Foundation www.heartfoundation.org.nz

