

seniors first BC

AGING AND HEALTHY LIVING: BEING ACTIVE!

“Physical activity plays an important role in your health, well-being and quality of life (Canada.ca, 2019).”

Most people think when you turn 65 it's time to start slowing down your physical activity and taking it easy. While it's true we all need our rest and relaxation at any age, the aging body and mind need to stay active to remain healthy, both physically and mentally. There are many factors that contribute to an individual's health, but this post will focus on physical activity, including how often and when it can be done, its benefits, and examples of older adults who have exercise as a part of their lifestyles.

Engage in Physical Activity

The World Health Organization recommends older adults to do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity throughout the week. In addition, aerobic activity should be performed in sessions of **at least 10 minutes in duration**, while muscle-strengthening activities should be done on **2 or more days a week**.

Are you looking at your current schedule and wondering how you will fit that all in? Remember that physical activity doesn't always mean hitting the gym or doing laps in the pool. For example, if your grocery store is a 10 to 20-minute walk, maybe skip driving there once in a while. A brisk walk is a fantastic way to get in some aerobic activity, and the strength-training when you carry your grocery bag on the way home is a bonus.

When scheduled, it could look something like this:

Sunday 30 minute brisk walk	Monday 30 minute brisk walk	Tuesday 30 minute brisk walk	Wednesday Weight Training	Thursday 30 minute brisk walk	Friday 30 minute brisk walk	Saturday Weight Training
						

Example 1: Moderate-Intensity Activity and Muscle-Strengthening Activity

Total: 150 minutes moderate-intensity aerobic activity + 2 days muscle-strengthening activity

The most important thing when it comes to any routine is that it's something you can stick to, and it's easier if you enjoy doing it. If you are someone who has always enjoyed exercising, such as doing yoga, swimming, or playing tennis, keep doing what you love! Making time for yourself to do an activity that brings you joy and keeps you healthy is very important and consider this your permission to make it a priority. And if you're someone who never enjoyed playing sports or working out, guess what, that's okay too! **There are lots of opportunities throughout the day to move your body.** Things like raking the leaves, vacuuming, and unloading the dishwasher are all examples of activities that require movement, balance, and strength.

Other ways to keep motivated is by doing physical activity with other people. For example, if you are a cyclist, head to a spin class to get that group fitness motivation. Or, schedule a nature walk with a friend or family member (including those with two or four legs). Having something or someone to hold you accountable will help keep you on track when it comes to getting in those hours of physical activity.

What's in it for me? Benefits of Physical Activity

The benefits of physical activity are wide-ranging and recommended no matter your age group. As we get older, we experience **sarcopenia**, which is a common degenerative loss of skeletal muscle. This is a part of why aging and physical activity go hand-in-hand. It's important to keep your muscles, bones, and joints strong and healthy with movements you can sustain, so don't overdo it!

The picture below highlights some of the other benefits that can come with physical activity:



Benefits for Healthy Aging

- Improves sleep
- Reduces risk of falling
- Improves balance
- Improves joint mobility
- Extends years of active life
- Helps prevent weak bones and muscle loss
- Delays onset of cognitive decline

Falling – How to prevent it

Being physically active is a **major defense against the risk factors for falling**. Not only does it assist in building and supporting your muscles, regular physical activity will improve your **balance and flexibility**. Being active and aware of your body will give you the confidence and assurance you need to navigate any situation. Believing that you're going to fall is actually a risk factor and predictor when it comes to falling. Physical activity will do a lot to slow the loss of bone density as well.

Seniors Olympics

We know that some of **the strongest humans are older adults**. Here are some examples:

- A 61-year-old potato farmer in Australia won the 875-kilometre Sydney-to-Melbourne marathon
- A 72-year-old sophomore on a college tennis team hits 130 practice serves daily and competes in slalom and giant slalom skiing events in the winter
- Sixteen men (62 to 77 years of age) and six women (49 to 70 years of age) bicycled 7700 kilometres from Victoria, BC, to St. John's, NL, in 100 days
- Never physically active before age 65, a 75-year-old woman jogs 14 kilometres four or five nights a week and teaches an aerobics class three mornings a week

Who knows, maybe we will see you next year at the Canada 55+ Games!

As with any changes to your lifestyle, **please be sure to contact a doctor** that you trust before making changes to your exercise regimen.

REFERENCE LINKS

[Physical Activity Tips for Older Adults \(65 Years and Older\)](#)

[Physical Activity and Older Adults](#)

[Adding Physical Activity to Your Life](#)

[Physical Activity: Why It Matters](#)

[Aging As a Social Process: Physically Active Adults at Play and Competition](#)

[Canada55Plus: History](#)

CONTRIBUTOR

Thank you to our volunteer Meeka Marsolias for writing this blog!