

**You're never too old to feel the benefits of physical activity. In fact, being active can be an important factor in staying healthy and keeping your independence as you get older.**

As well as helping your heart and lungs to work efficiently, maintaining a healthy weight and keeping your muscles and bones strong, regular physical activity can:

- help control high blood pressure and diabetes;
- slow down the loss of bone density that can lead to fractures;
- help you maintain your mobility and independence;
- reduce your risk of a serious fall by improving your posture, balance, flexibility and coordination;
- help you cope with everyday tasks;
- reduce stress, help you relax and improve your sleep;
- help you get out and about and make new friends.

## 30 minutes a day

**Just 30 minutes a day of moderate activity such as brisk walking can make all the difference to your health as you get older.**

If this sounds a lot, try building up gradually. For example, start with a gentle walk or by trying a new activity for just 10 minutes at a time.

The majority of people, whatever their age or condition, can benefit from physical activity. The greatest benefits are gained by inactive people who start to take part in regular physical activity. You will notice the difference as soon as you begin.

Different types of activities can provide different benefits. For example, you could try:

- walking for strength;
- swimming for flexibility;
- t'ai chi for balance;
- dancing for coordination.

## Getting started



### **Be more active every day**

Build physical activity into your daily routine. Walk to the shops or put a little extra effort into housework or gardening.



### **Gently does it!**

Start any new activity gradually and progress at your own speed. Don't overdo it - you should still be able to hold a conversation while you're exercising.



### **Try different things**

Find out what's on near you and choose some activities you enjoy. Vary the activities you do to maintain interest.



### **Make it a social event**

Join a class or group, or go with a friend. There are physical activity classes especially tailored for older people – try your local leisure centre or phone 028 9024 5729 to find out about the Actively Ageing Well initiative in your local area.

## Is it right for me?

To benefit your health, activity doesn't need to be vigorous. Moderate activity and beginning gradually is the way to progress.



If you enjoy good health and do not suffer from heart, bone or joint problems or pains in the chest, you can gradually build more activity into your life without consulting your doctor.

However, always check with your GP if you have had an illness, have any worries about your health, or if you have been inactive for a long time. You can improve your health by becoming more active even after a major illness, such as a heart attack, but you will need to do so under your doctor's guidance.

## Local views

*"Physical activity has helped me overcome individual inhibitions and lack of confidence."*

Participant in Get Active in the Community Grant scheme, Banbridge

*"Since becoming involved... I have made new friends and I have lost 1½ stone in weight."*

LH, Nifty 50s Club, Portadown

get a life  get active



**Health**  
Promotion  
Agency

**ih**  
Investing  
for Health



Designed and produced by:  
**Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland**  
18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast BT2 8HS  
Tel: 028 9031 1611 (Voice/Minicom)  
Fax: 028 9031 1711.  
[www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk](http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk)

Photographs reproduced courtesy of the British Heart Foundation.



# Make the first move

