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.**

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

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

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