

A photograph of three women in a swimming pool. They are all smiling and have their arms raised in a celebratory gesture. The woman on the left is wearing a dark blue swimsuit. The woman in the middle is wearing a black swimsuit and has purple swim goggles on her head. The woman on the right is wearing a purple and blue patterned swimsuit. The water is bright blue, and there are lane lines visible. The text '3 Go!' is overlaid in the top right corner in a white, sans-serif font.

3
Go!

Now that you know about the many types of physical activity and you've set your goals, you're ready to go! This chapter has tips to help you get started, resume your activity if you've stopped, stay active and even increase your activity level over time.

Four keys to success

There are four ways to approach physical activity.

- include physical activity in your everyday life
- try all four types of physical activity
- plan for breaks in your routine (life happens!)
- build up the benefits.

Include physical activity in your everyday life

Physical activity needs to be a regular, permanent habit to produce benefits. Again, the key word is **you**. Set yourself up to succeed right from the start by choosing activities that appeal to you, being safe, charting your progress to see your success, and making your activity routine fit your personal lifestyle. Here are a few ways to make physical activity a regular part of your daily life and get the most out of everyday activities you already do.

Keep it easy

If it's difficult or costs too much, you are less likely to maintain your activity. You are more likely to be active if it's easy to do.

- Put your weights next to your lounge chair so you can do some lifting while you watch TV.
- Walk up and down the soccer field during your grandchild's game.
- Replace a short car trip with a walk.
- Walk the length of the entire shopping centre or every aisle of the supermarket when you go shopping.
- When you go out to get the mail, walk around the block.
- Join a gym or fitness centre that's close to home. You can be active all at once, or break it up into smaller amounts throughout the day.
- Do more of the activities you already like and know how to do.

Keep it a priority

Many of us lead busy lives and it's easy to put physical activity at the bottom of the 'to do' list. Remember, being active is one of the most important things you can do each day to maintain and improve your health. Make a point to include physical activities throughout your day. Try being active first thing in the morning before you get busy. Think of your time to be active as a special appointment and mark it on your calendar.

Older adults should accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days.





Quick tips

You're more likely to stay active if you:

- think you will benefit from your activities
- include activities you enjoy
- feel you can do the activities correctly
- believe the activities are safe
- have regular access to the activities
- can fit the activities into your daily routine
- find that the activities are affordable
- can see the benefits of regular physical activity.

Keep it social.

Enlist a friend or family member. Many people agree that having an 'activity buddy' keeps them going.

- Take a yoga class with a neighbour or friend.
- If you don't already have an activity partner, find one by joining a local walking club or a class at a nearby gym or senior citizens centre.
- Take a walk during lunch with a co-worker.

Keep it interesting and make it fun.

Do things you enjoy and pick up the pace a bit.

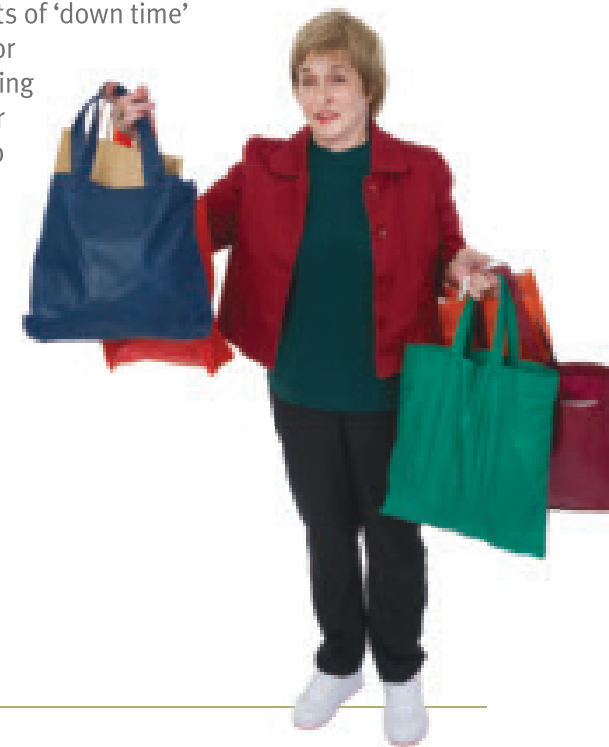
- If you love the outdoors, try cycling, orienteering, jogging or bushwalking.
- Listen to music or a book on CD while walking, gardening or raking.
- Plan a bushwalk in a nearby national park.

Above all, make it an active decision.

Seize opportunities. Choose to be active in many places and many ways.

- When you unload the groceries, strengthen your arms by lifting the milk carton or a 500 gram can a few times before you put it away.
- When you go shopping, build your endurance by parking the car at the far end of the car park and walking briskly to the shop. Or get off the bus one or two stops earlier than usual.

- Instead of calling or emailing a colleague at work, go in person — and take the stairs!
- Carefully take a few extra trips up and down the stairs at home to strengthen your legs and build endurance.
- Try to do some of your errands on foot rather than in the car.
- Multi-task the active way:
 - While you're waiting in line, practise your balancing skills by standing on one foot for a few seconds, then the other. Gradually build up your time.
 - While you're talking on the phone, stand up and do a few leg raises or toe stands to strengthen your legs.
 - Take advantage of small bits of 'down time' to do an exercise or two. For example, while you're waiting for the coffee to brew or for your spouse to get ready to go out, do a few wall push-ups or calf stretches.





Try all four types of physical activity

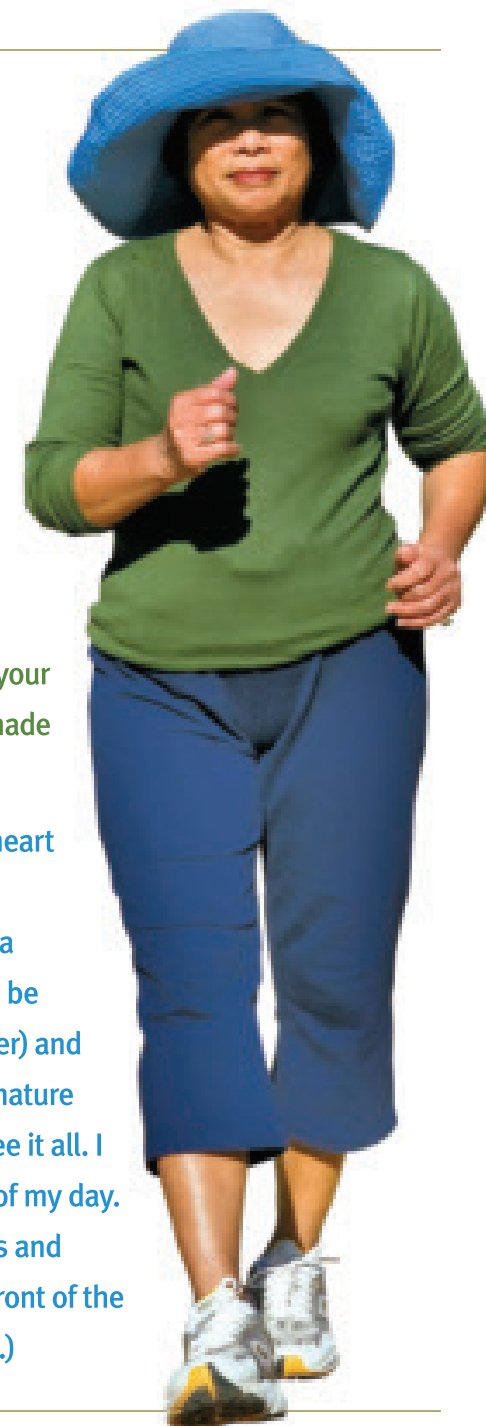
Most people tend to focus on one type of physical activity and think they're doing enough. The goal is to be creative and choose activities from each of the four types — strength, balance, flexibility and endurance. Mixing it up will help you reap the benefits of each type of physical activity, as well as reduce boredom and risk of injury. You can use the weekly physical activity plan in your workbook to write down your activities.



Make it easy

Finding enjoyable ways to add physical activity to your life can be the ticket to success. See how Marian made it work for her:

'I'm an active 62-year-old, but a family history of heart disease and high cholesterol convinced me that I needed to be more active. After I tried walking on a treadmill at a nearby community centre, I knew I'd be happier outside. So I got a pedometer (step counter) and started walking around my little town. I love how nature changes so subtly with the seasons and I get to see it all. I always come home with more energy for the rest of my day. I even feel energised enough to do some stretches and resistance training most nights while relaxing in front of the television.' (For more on pedometers, see page 74.)





Quick tip

If you're thinking of moving to a retirement or assisted-living community, ask if the community has a pool, organised physical activities, walking trails, a golf course or personal trainer. Does it have well-lit footpaths so you can walk safely in the evening as well as during the day? Are there parks nearby?



Plan for breaks in your routine (life happens!)

Getting older can mean more time for trips to see children and grandchildren or holidays away from home. People retire and move to new houses or even new parts of the country. Sometimes the unexpected happens — family illness, carer responsibilities or the death of a loved one. All these events can interrupt your physical activity routine.

These breaks can make it hard or even impossible at times to stick with your regular activities. But you can start again. Here are a few ideas to help you stay active or start again if you've had to stop.

Don't be too hard on yourself. Recognise that there will be times when you won't want to be active, or it feels too hard. You are not alone; everyone has those feelings. Just try to get back to your activities as soon as possible. The sooner you resume some sort of activity, the better you'll feel and the easier it will be to get back into your routine.

Talk with your doctor or health professional about when you can resume your regular routine if you stopped exercising because of an illness or new symptoms.

Think about the reasons you started being more active and the goals you set for yourself. Remembering your motivations and how much you've already accomplished may help recharge your batteries and get you started again.

Ask family and friends to help you get back on track. Sometimes you may want an activity buddy. At other times, all you may need is a word of support.

Try something easier or an activity you haven't done recently if you no longer like the activity you started. You might even want to try a physical activity you've never done before. Mastering something simple or new may give you the confidence you need to resume regular activity.

Talk with your doctor or fitness professional. You may get the boost you need to move past the hurdle.

Start again at a comfortable level if you haven't been active for several weeks. Then gradually build back up. With a little time, you'll be back on track.

Think creatively about other ways to be active if you can't do your regular physical activities because of bad weather or a change in your routine. For example, if caring for a loved one is keeping you indoors, try an exercise video or DVD, jog on the spot, dance around your lounge room or walk up and down the stairs a few extra times. Just keep moving!

Be flexible. When your grandchildren come for a visit, reschedule your planned physical activities to earlier in the day, or take them with you for a walk.

Believe in yourself! Feel confident that even if your activity is interrupted, you can start again and be successful. Don't worry about the time you missed. What's important is to focus on your fitness goals and start again at whatever level is possible for you.

A few more tips on coping with breaks in your physical activity routine

Sometimes the reason you have to stop exercising is temporary; sometimes it's permanent. For example, there may be a change in your living arrangements or in your health. Some are happy occasions; some are sad. Here are some ways to manage these breaks.

Temporary change in your situation

You're on holiday.

- Many hotels now have gym equipment. Check out the recreation facilities where you'll be staying and bring along your exercise clothing or equipment (resistance band, swimming togs, or walking shoes).
- Get out and see the sights on foot rather than by tour bus.

Caring for an ill spouse is taking up much of your time.

- Work out to an exercise video or DVD when your spouse is resting.
- Ask a family member or friend to come over so you can go for a walk.

Temporary change in your health

The flu keeps you out of action for a few weeks.

- Wait until you feel better and then start your activity again.
- Gradually build back up to your previous level of activity.

Permanent change in your situation

Your usual activity buddy moves away.

- Ask another friend to join you in your physical activities.
- Ask other older adults in your area where they go for walks or what physical activity resources are available nearby.
- Join an exercise class at your local community centre or senior citizens centre. This is a great way to meet other active people.
- Join a walking group or bushwalking club.

You move to a new community.

- Check out the gyms, community centre, local council activities, parks and recreation associations in your new neighbourhood. Look for activities that match your interests and abilities.
- Get involved!

Permanent change in your health

You are recovering from hip or back surgery or have been diagnosed with a chronic disease.

- Talk with your doctor or health professional about specific exercises and activities you can do safely when you're feeling better.
- Start slowly and gradually build up your activities as your fitness and strength increases.



Build up the benefits

Once you start exercising and becoming more physically active, you'll begin to see results in just a few weeks — you'll feel stronger and more energetic. You'll notice that you can do things easier, faster or for longer than before. This tells you that your body is getting used to a higher level of activity. Now is the time to build on those benefits by doing more. Keep your starting point in mind, though. For some people, switching from one to two-kilogram weights is a big step forward. For others, building up to walking briskly or even running is a reasonable goal.

No matter what your starting point:

- **Add new physical activities.** Be creative! Try some new activities to keep your interest alive.
 - Sign up for dance lessons.
 - Talk to your friends about bowling together once a week.
 - Join a water aerobics class.
 - Save petrol by walking to your nearby supermarket or corner store.
 - Can you trade in any of your electric appliances for muscle-powered versions: how about your electric juicer or your powered leaf blower?



- **Review your goals.** If you are able, do your activities longer, further or harder. Use the progression hints for the exercises in this book.
 - If you walk 30 minutes at lunchtime every day, make it 40 minutes.
 - If you only have 30 minutes for lunch, pick up the pace so you're walking faster and further in the same amount of time.
 - Try using a pedometer (step counter) to track your progress. Seeing the number of steps add up can be great motivation.
 - If you usually swim 400 metres, build up to 800 metres.
 - Use a harder resistance band when you do strength exercises.
- **Do the activities more often.** Spend time in your garden more often. Head over to the gym three times a week instead of two. Walk every day instead of every second day.
- **Don't push yourself too hard.** You may feel some minor discomfort or muscle soreness when you start to increase your physical activity. This should go away as you get used to the activities. However, if you feel sick in the stomach or have strong pain, you've done too much. The old saying 'no pain, no gain' is not true. If you feel any pain, slow down or stop. Go easier and then gradually build up.



Go here for more information

Healthy eating and physical activity go hand in hand. See Chapter 6, starting on page 81 for more on this topic.