

Exercise

Why is exercise important?

Staying active is the single most important thing you can do to stay fit, healthy and independent. Staying active keeps your muscles strong, your joints mobile and helps maintain or improve your sense of balance.



How much exercise is enough?

1. **General physical activity** for general health and fitness benefits
 - At least 30 minutes for 5 days per week is recommended
 - The physical activity should be brisk enough to increase your breathing and heart rate, but you should still be able to hold a conversation and speak in full sentences
 - Some examples include: brisk walking, aqua aerobics, golf, group exercise classes, swimming
2. **Balance exercises** are the single most important exercise to prevent falls
 - You should aim to do about 2 hours of balance exercises every week
 - Make sure that your balance exercises are challenging yet safe (have a chair, kitchen bench or something secure close-by, in case you need to steady yourself)

Tips:

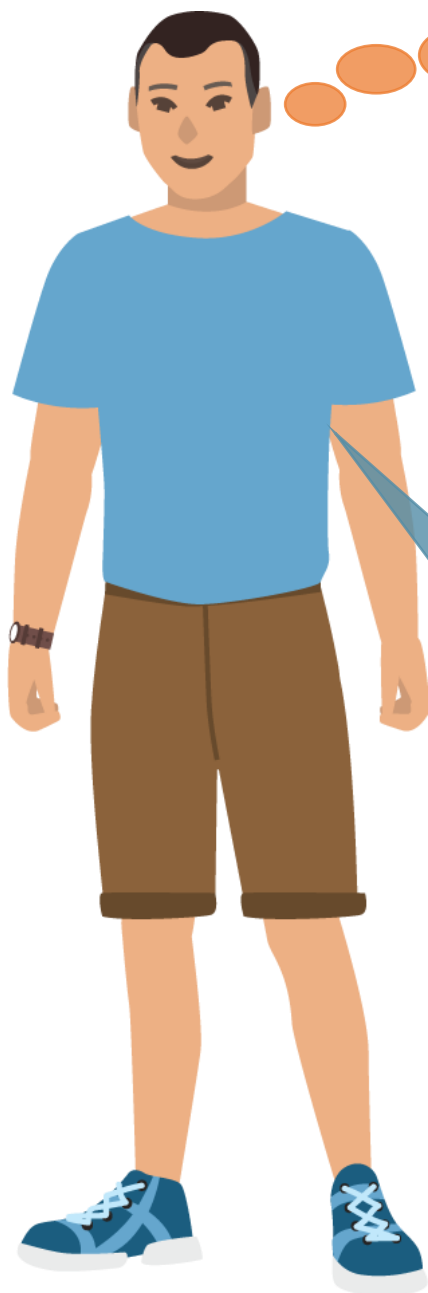
- You don't have to do all of your exercise in one go – being active in 10-15 minutes bouts during the day works just as well
- Try to mix up your activities to exercise different muscles and keep you interested
- If you haven't exercised for a while, start slow and gradually build up
- If you have chronic health conditions talk to a health professional (e.g. GP or physiotherapist) before starting

Remember – age is no barrier! Research shows that any exercise, at any age, is worth the effort

What are the benefits of exercise and physical activity?

- improve your balance and prevent falls (if you incorporate balance exercises)
- improve your strength and fitness
- keep you independent and able to do the activities you enjoy, such as visiting friends and relatives
- prevent or reduce the impact of chronic diseases
- reduce stress, anxiety and depression
- improve your concentration, confidence and sense of wellbeing

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Key points to remember:

- Staying active is the single most important thing you can do to stay fit and healthy
- Balance exercises prevent falls
- Staying active helps you to stay independent in your daily activities
- Staying active can help you feel more confident in your physical ability and balance
- Being more confident and less concerned about falling can reduce your risk of falling
- Physical activity can help manage stress, anxiety and low mood

What can I do right now?

- Start exercising with a friend/family member to keep you motivated
- Set short-term fitness goals that you will aim to achieve every week
- Choose a physical activity that you enjoy and is right for your physical and health condition
- Aim towards reaching a total of 150 minutes of physical activity per week
- Start slowly and build up over time
- If you have chronic health conditions talk to a health professional (e.g. GP or physiotherapist) before starting
- Incorporate balance exercises into your exercise routine to reduce your risk of falling

Tips:

- Talk to your health professional (e.g. GP or physiotherapist) if you need help to start exercising
- In NSW, search for exercise programs here: <https://www.activeandhealthy.nsw.gov.au/>
- For more information on physical activity visit:
<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/physical-activity-guidelines-for-older-adults>
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/HealthyLiving/physical-activity-for-seniors>

Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your healthcare needs and how to prevent falls, you should seek advice from your health professional. This information was current at the time of development. The information is generalisable for community-dwelling people >60 years.