



Physical Activity in Later Life

Information about the advantages of maintaining physical activity, and ways to find out about what's available near you.



Photo courtesy of Kaumatua Tramping Club

It's never too late to start

Whatever your age, regular activity will improve your health, make you feel better, and make it easier to do everyday tasks.

It's now easier than ever before to get support to get more active and to find an activity that will be enjoyable.

Being active as you grow older brings immediate and long term physiological, psychological and social benefits. There is also the benefit of helping to maintain independence in everyday living.

Health benefits

- Increased muscle strength and flexibility
- Improved balance and co-ordination and reduced risk of falls
- Enhanced sense of wellbeing and improved mood and self-esteem
- Help to prevent depression and anxiety
- Reduced risk of suffering from cardio vascular disease, cancer, osteoporosis and diabetes
- Better sleep
- Broadened social networks, leading to new friends and a sense of purpose.

Everyday living

Keeping active can help you to do everyday tasks by giving:

- The strength to lift and carry groceries
- Flexibility to tie shoe laces, wash hair or hang up washing
- The balance to climb stairs or get on and off a bus
- The speed to cross the road before the green man turns to red
- The muscle strength to walk to the shops
- The energy to play with grandchildren.

Green Prescriptions

If you want to begin to be more physically active, or if you have chronic health conditions or injuries you should first see your health professional. You may be given a Green Prescription.

A patient with a Green Prescription is referred by the medical centre for support and personal encouragement to start some regular physical activity.

With any increase in exercise it is wise to start gently and build up gradually. Finding something enjoyable at a level that is comfortable is a good place to start. Anyone who feels unwell or has pain during exercise should stop immediately and seek medical advice.



Tai Chi, Northland. Photo courtesy of ACC

Find out about physical activity opportunities in your community

- Your regional sports trust will know about exercise and falls prevention programmes in your area
- Many sports trusts have kaiwhakahaere who provide advice about Maori sports including kaumatua programmes
- Your local Age Concern will know about a range of opportunities to become involved. Check out www.ageconcern.org.nz for details, or look up Age Concern in the telephone directory
- Your local government town or city council will have recreational programmes for a range of activities
- www.moh.govt.nz – for more information about Green Prescriptions
- www.sparc.org.nz – a wide range of research, information and resources
- www.acc.co.nz – for information on falls prevention programmes such as modified Tai Chi
- 0800 ACTIVE (0800 228 483) puts you through to your local regional sports trust or Green Prescription Team. They can give support and advice on opportunities locally for activity appropriate to the individual, and for information about Green Prescriptions and Push Play.

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