

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TOOLKIT

FOR OLDER ADULTS



**PARTICIPATION**

# MOVE WELL, AGE WELL

For the first time ever, older adults make up a greater share of Canada's population than children. By 2031, about 23 per cent of Canadians could be seniors.

We know that one way older adults can maintain and enhance their well-being and independence is through a lifestyle that embraces physical activity. Taking part in regular physical activity is key to improving wellness for older adults. It is one of the core ways to help improve and maintain independence and overall health and well-being.

## OLDER ADULTS WHO ARE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE HAVE:



1

**LOWER RATES** of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke and type 2 diabetes



2

**LOWER RATES** of colon and breast cancers



3

**IMPROVED** self-esteem, mood, and the ability to handle stress.



4

**LOWER RISK** of falling, and better cognitive function



5

**IMPROVED** strength, balance, flexibility and mobility



To help older adults sit less and move more, ParticipACTION has developed a Physical Activity Toolkit for Older Adults! The toolkit includes physical activity guidelines, a walking program, a movement log, articles on the role physical activity plays in prevention and management of chronic disease, plus lots of useful resources to help older adults get moving.

Being active is an enjoyable experience at any age. We encourage you to get involved in your community and motivate friends and family to join you along this journey to be active as we age.

## EXPLORE THIS TOOLKIT TO FIND:

### DOWNLOADS



**CANADIAN PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY GUIDELINES**

### ACTIVITY PLANNING & TRACKING



**10 FUN WAYS  
TO STAY ACTIVE**



**MOVEMENT LOG**



**8 WEEK WALKING  
PROGRAM**

### HELPFUL ARTICLES



**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
AND ARTHRITIS**



**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
AND DIABETES**



**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
AND HEART DISEASE**

### COMMUNITY RESOURCES



**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

# CANADIAN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for adults 65 years and older are available for download [here](#).

## Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

FOR OLDER ADULTS - 65 YEARS & OLDER

### Guidelines



To achieve health benefits, and improve functional abilities, adults aged 65 years and older should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.



It is also beneficial to add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least 2 days per week.



Those with poor mobility should perform physical activities to enhance balance and prevent falls.



More physical activity provides greater health benefits.

### Let's Talk Intensity!

Moderate-intensity physical activities will cause older adults to sweat a little and to breathe harder.

Activities like:

- Brisk walking
- Bicycling

Vigorous-intensity physical activities will cause older adults to sweat and be 'out of breath'. Activities like:

- Cross-country skiing
- Swimming

### Being active for at least 150 minutes per week can help reduce the risk of:

- Chronic disease (such as high blood pressure and heart disease) and,
- Premature death

And also help to:

- Maintain functional independence
- Maintain mobility
- Improve fitness
- Improve or maintain body weight
- Maintain bone health and,
- Maintain mental health and feel better

### Pick a time. Pick a place. Make a plan and move more!

- ☒ Join a community urban poling or mall walking group.
- ☒ Go for a brisk walk around the block after lunch.
- ☒ Take a dance class in the afternoon.
- ☒ Train for and participate in a run or walk for charity!

- ☒ Take up a favourite sport again.
- ☒ Be active with the family! Plan to have "active reunions".
- ☒ Go for a nature hike on the weekend.
- ☒ Take the dog for a walk after dinner.

**Now is the time. Walk, run,  
or wheel, and embrace life.**



[www.csep.ca/guidelines](http://www.csep.ca/guidelines)



# 10 FUN WAYS TO STAY ACTIVE

Being active is an important part of living a long and healthy life. Regular exercise can boost your energy, help you maintain your independence, and manage symptoms of pain from preexisting conditions or illnesses.

The good news is that it's never too late to start. According to Canadian guidelines, older adults are encouraged to get 150 minutes of heart-pumping physical activity each week. Participating in weight-bearing exercises and resistance training at least two times a week is a great way to build strong bones and muscles. And let's not forget about balance—it's important for older adults to participate in activities that help increase stability and prevent falls. The intensity

of your exercises should be determined by paying close attention to your body. If something begins to hurt, don't push it; an injury will set you back and may cause some serious damage if you overexert yourself.

The key to sustainable activity level is to build a routine that you can maintain over time; a great way of accomplishing this is to find a way to incorporate extra activity into things you already enjoy. Before starting any physical activity program, check with your doctor or health professional.

Here are some top activities that are especially beneficial to older adults:



## GEOCACHING

Love playing hide and seek as a kid? Well Geocaching is for you! This outdoor recreational activity gets participants to use a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver or mobile device to hide and seek containers, called "geocaches". The great thing is there are geocaches all over the world so you can be active anywhere and you can do it any time!



## PICKLEBALL

One of the fastest growing sports in Canada, pickleball can be played by doubles or singles. A hybrid between tennis, ping pong and badminton, pickleball is a great way to get your heart pumping, all while being a low-impact activity. It has a great social aspect and can be played on an indoor or outdoor court. It is also great for all ages, so why not take the grandchildren with you and make it an activity for the whole family!



## LAWN BOWLING

Looking for a fun sport that involves being outdoors and surrounded by friends? Look no further than lawn bowling. This activity involves a bit of everything—walking up and down the green, bending and rolling a weighted ball, problem solving and strategizing, and of course, team spirit.



### AQUAFIT

Basically, just an exercise class done in water, aqua fit is a playful way to get your heart pumping. The natural buoyancy and turbidity of water offers light resistance to help strengthen your muscles, while supporting your body weight. When performed in warm water it can provide relief for stiff muscles and sore joints, ideal for those with arthritis, fibromyalgia, and lower back pain.



### TAI CHI

Often practiced in groups in outdoor parks and open spaces, tai chi is all about flow and balance. Drawing on aspects of health, meditation and martial arts, tai chi involves slow, methodical repetition of defined movements. This activity is easy on joints but will help with strengthening muscles and clearing the mind as well.



### YOGA

Yoga can be an ideal activity for individuals of all ages, abilities, and skill levels. It involves transitioning to various positions slowly and in a controlled manner. Yoga can be a great activity for busting stress and increasing strength and flexibility and can be adapted to all levels by using a chair or stability ball for support. Namaste!



### DANCING

From ballroom to square dancing, moving to your favourite song is a great way to get active in groups and have fun. Added bonus: having to remember dance sequences and steps is a great exercise for the brain as well.



### GARDENING

Bending, squatting, stretching, and lifting are just some of the many physically-demanding components of gardening. You can even sneak in some resistance-type moves if you are doing some heavier digging and/or shoveling. Enjoy the tranquility of being outdoors and building a beautiful garden, all while supporting your health simultaneously.



### SNOWSHOEING

Winter in Canada can be a great way to stay physically active while enjoying the great outdoors. Get together with a few friends or join a community snowshoe group and hike the trails. Stop along the way for a bite to eat and share some stories with each other before heading back from your outdoor adventure.



### BERRY PICKING

What's a summer without berries?! Berry picking is a great activity for all ages to enjoy. Hiking to your secret location to pick berries can be great for your balance and strengthening of your bones and muscles. If you don't eat them all before you get home, prepare healthy smoothies or yogurt parfaits and enjoy!



# MOVEMENT LOG

Tracking is a powerful tool for increasing how much you move each day. Research shows that people who track their progress are far more likely to reach their active goals.

When it comes to keeping track of your activity, there are a lot of good options. You can use a wearable tracker or an app on your smartphone,

or you can keep it simple with a calendar, journal, day planner, whiteboard, or whatever you've got. The key here is frequency. The more often you track, the better, so use whatever is most convenient for you. If you don't already regularly track somewhere, a great option is this Movement Log. Remember: those who track stay on track.

 Week of:	ACTIVITY What did you do?	DURATION How long did you do it?	INTENSITY How hard did you work? Light, moderate or vigorous?
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

## LET'S TALK INTENSITY!

**Light.** Your body is moving, but you're not sweating or breathing harder. You should have no problem singing or holding a conversation.

**Moderate.** Causes you to sweat a little and to breathe harder. You should still be able to talk, but not sing along to your favourite song.

**Vigorous.** Causes you to sweat and be out of breath. You shouldn't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.



# 8 WEEK WALKING PROGRAM

Walking is one of the safest and most enjoyable ways to take steps towards a healthier you. The benefits of walking are many and include helping you reduce your risk of chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, heart disease or type 2 diabetes, as well as reduce the impact of joint and bone degenerative diseases such as osteoporosis and arthritis. It can also help lower feelings of anxiety and depression, all while helping you manage stress better.

For older adults, achieving 150 minutes of physical activity per week can help you live a longer life, improve your fitness, maintain muscle strength and flexibility, and ensure good bone health. Walking will help you feel better mentally and will have an impact on your overall quality of life.

## GUIDELINES AND TIPS:



### GET STARTED

- ✓ Before you start any new type of physical activity, check with your doctor or health professional to see if it is right for you.
- ✓ The right shoes and clothing are very important. Choose comfortable, low or no heeled shoes with non-skid soles. Clothing should allow easy movement of arms and legs. Wear layers so you can regulate your temperature during activity.



### SET GOALS

- ✓ Goal setting is an important part of sticking with a plan. Be realistic and don't get discouraged by setbacks. Set daily goals that you can reach and that will keep you motivated.
- ✓ Try using a pedometer, a mobile phone app or another wearable device to track your steps and set new goals.



### BE SAFE

- ✓ Pick places to walk with an even, soft surface and where there are not a lot of objects in the way. And if you're walking in the evening, be sure to wear reflective gear. Drink plenty of water. Unless your doctor has asked you to limit fluids, be sure to drink water when you exercise.
- ✓ Choose to walk indoors when weather conditions make it difficult or unsafe. Malls or community centres can be great places to walk and often have walking groups that you can join.



### STAY MOTIVATED

- ✓ Start slowly, gradually building your speed and increasing your distance.
- ✓ Find a walking partner or group. The encouragement of others will help keep you motivated. If you've made a date to go walking with a friend, you are more likely to keep it if you know someone else is depending on you.





## 8 WEEK BEGINNER WALKING PROGRAM

WEEK	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	15 min	Rest	Rest	15 min	Rest	Walk 15 min or Rest	20min
2	15 min	Rest	15 min	Rest	15 min	Walk 15 min or Rest	20 min
3	20 min	Rest	20 min	Rest	20 min	Walk 15 min or Rest	25 min
4	20 min	Rest	20 min	Rest	20 min	15 min	25 min
5	25 min	Rest	25 min	Rest	25 min	Walk 15 min or Rest	30 min
6	25 min	Rest	25 min	Rest	25 min	20 min	30 min
7	30 min	Rest	30 min	Rest	30 min	20 min	35 min
8	30min	Rest	30 min	Rest	30 min	30 min	30 min

This program is intended as a guide only. Adjust to your ability level. Before starting this or any physical activity program, check with your doctor/health professional.

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY + ARTHRITIS



Arthritis is defined as inflammation of the joint. For many older adults, joint pain may sound like a reason to avoid physical activity, but the opposite is true! In addition to the numerous health benefits, being physically active—with the right kinds of activity—can actually help manage arthritis pain.

Here are some key things to keep in mind when getting active with arthritis:



## BEGIN SLOWLY AND PROGRESS GRADUALLY

Even though you may be enthusiastic about getting active, a common problem is taking on too much, too soon. Gradually increase the duration and intensity or complexity of your movements. Avoid rapid or repetitive movements of your affected joints. Choose activities that protect your joints and avoid activities with jumping, rapid twisting, turning or sudden stops, as they are stressful to your knees and spine. You may want to consider purchasing special shoes or orthotics for extra support and shock absorption.



## ADAPT YOUR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TO YOUR NEEDS

Joints affected by arthritis may be unstable or have restricted range of motion because of pain, stiffness or swelling. Be kind to these joints and don't push their limits, as they are at higher risk for injury. The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend choosing a variety of activities from the following three groups: endurance, strength and flexibility. Flexibility activities are particularly important for older adults with arthritis, because they help maintain or restore normal joint movement and relieve stiffness.

## POPULAR ENDURANCE ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER ADULTS WITH ARTHRITIS INCLUDE:



### Walking

Walking is a great activity for older adults with arthritis because it doesn't put a lot of stress on your joints. Faster walking speeds do increase joint stress, so you should keep your speed in line with your body's ability. Walking is inexpensive and can be done anytime, anywhere—all you need is good pair of shoes. If your arthritis affects your hip, knee, ankle or foot joints, you should check with your health-care provider.



### Water Activities

Get active in the water and your joints will appreciate it. Water supports your body weight and adds resistance, which also enhances muscle strength and endurance. There are therapeutic pools that are specifically designed for people with arthritis that are kept at warm temperatures, which will help to loosen you up. These pools are also equipped with specialized access ramps to make it easier to get in and out.



## Cycling

Cycling is a great indoor or outdoor activity for older adults with arthritis. When starting out, keep the resistance down and don't pedal too hard. For those with back pain, try a recumbent bicycle. A recumbent bicycle lets you sit back, supported by a full seat with your legs in front of you in a horizontal position. This position puts less stress on your back than a conventional bicycle.

Physical activity is safe and enjoyable for older adults with arthritis, but it is important to know your limits. While it's normal to experience some discomfort when being active, sharp pain or more pain than usual are warning signs that something is wrong. Listen to your body.

Remember that before you start any new type of physical activity, check with your doctor or health professional to see if it is right for you.



For more  
information visit:  
[www.arthritis.ca](http://www.arthritis.ca)

**“ I have been attending water aerobics at the Gander Arts and Culture Swimming Pool for about eight years. There are six generations of arthritics in my family and I realize how important it is to keep active. Since I've been involved in water aerobics, I have more flexibility in my fingers and toes. The water acts as a buffer and I have a larger range of motion in the water environment and less stiffness in my knees and hips. We make the sessions fun for everybody and after 45 minutes of exercises, everyone feels rejuvenated and looks forward to the next session. There is one lady in our group who is over 75 years old who told me “I feel 10 yrs. younger after I come to these sessions!” ”**

**Jeanne** 72 years of age, Water Aerobics Leader

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY + DIABETES



In the words of Mary Poppins, just a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down. However, a few too many spoonfuls and not enough physical activity are not the best medicine. Your body uses the sugar (glucose) in your bloodstream for energy, but having too much glucose in your blood can hurt you.

Diabetes is a condition you experience when your body cannot properly use and store glucose. It occurs when the body does not make enough insulin, or it does not respond well to the insulin it makes. If you have type 2 diabetes, glucose builds up in your blood instead of being used for energy. This type of diabetes, which is the most prevalent kind, is referred to as adult onset diabetes, because it is typically diagnosed in people over the age of 40.

Diabetes can lead to serious complications and premature death, but a healthy, active lifestyle can help people with diabetes manage it. Regular physical activity improves your body's sensitivity to insulin and actually helps manage your blood glucose levels. In fact, physical activity can even help prevent diabetes in those who may be at risk for it!

Whether you have diabetes or not, you will experience health benefits from participating in regular physical activity. If you do have type 2 diabetes, physical activity is on your side. Just make sure that you're prepared to get moving:



## CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR

- ✓ If you have diabetes complications, some kinds of physical activity can make your problem worse. Before you start any new type of physical activity, check with your doctor or health professional to see if it is right for you.
- ✓ Make sure you wear comfortable, proper-fitting shoes. Older adults with diabetes sometimes have foot problems. Check with your doctor or foot specialist to make sure you have suitable shoes. If it is not safe for you to walk, you could try cycling or swimming instead.



## KEEP SAFETY IN MIND

- ✓ Wear your Medic Alert bracelet or necklace.
- ✓ Monitor your blood glucose before, during, and after your physical activity to see how getting active affects your blood glucose levels.
- ✓ Carry food or glucose tablets with you so you will be ready to treat any symptoms of low blood glucose levels.





## STAY ACTIVE

- ✓ Try these resistance exercises developed by Diabetes Canada:  
<http://www.diabetes.ca/diabetes-and-you/healthy-living-resources/exercise/resistance-exercises-plan>
- ✓ Physical activity can help prevent and manage diabetes, as well as improve your overall health and well-being. Some may even say it's a sweet way to stay healthy!



For more information on getting active with diabetes, check out the Canadian Diabetes Association's national website:

[www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca)

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY + HEART DISEASE



Your heart is one of the most vital muscles in your body. It is the organ responsible for pumping blood through the body, supplying nutrients and oxygen to surrounding tissues, and removing waste.



## WHAT IS HEART DISEASE?

Heart disease is an umbrella term that refers to any group of conditions that affect the function and structure of the heart. Some examples include: high blood pressure (i.e., hypertension), high cholesterol, stroke, and heart attack.



## THE FACTS

Heart disease is one of the leading causes of death in Canada. Approximately 29 per cent of all deaths in Canada are attributed to heart disease. Women and Indigenous people are at heightened risk for heart disease; it kills 32 per cent more women than men, and Indigenous people are 1.5 to 2 times more likely than the general Canadian population to die of heart disease.

In addition to negatively impacting the lives of thousands of Canadians, it also has an enormous financial cost – it costs the Canadian economy close to \$20.9 billion per year.



## THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

**1** Physical activity plays a pivotal role in preventing and managing heart disease and related risk factors such as type 2 diabetes and obesity. Research shows that physical activity can reduce 21 per cent of heart disease cases in men, and 29 per cent in women. The good news is that your heart health is quite responsive to physical activity.

**2** Exercise helps strengthen your heart, allowing it to be more efficient at pumping blood throughout the body. As it becomes more efficient, the heart is able to pump higher amounts of blood with each beat and at a slower pace, therefore keeping your blood pressure under control.

**3** Physical activity helps increase your levels of “good” cholesterol (HDL) and decrease the amount of artery-clogging “bad” cholesterol (LDL).

**4** Physical activity also improves blood flow in the small vessels around the heart. It also helps create more branches and connections between these blood vessels. Consequently, there are other routes for blood to travel to and around the heart, decreasing the effects of narrow arteries of fatty deposits (i.e., clogs in the artery).

**5** Physical activity also helps improve your body’s sensitivity to insulin and helps manage your blood glucose levels, thus decreasing your risk for type 2 diabetes.

## Tips and Recommendations

For best results, aim for 150 minutes of heart-pumping (i.e., moderate to vigorous intensity) physical activity each week. To make this task less daunting, you can break up your activity throughout the week and participate in smaller bouts at a time.



### DRESS THE PART

Wear appropriate clothing and footwear. This includes hats and sunscreen in the summer months and walking poles or ice grips during the icy winter months to prevent falling.



### START SLOW

It's important not to rush your body into doing too much too fast. Give your body, including your heart, time to adjust to the new demands. Over time, you can start increasing the intensity.



### DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

Stay hydrated. This is particularly important as you start to incorporate more activity into your daily routine.



### CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR

And obviously, before starting any new exercise program, please check with your healthcare professional for sign-off.



**“ Within five days of first feeling pains in my chest, I had six bypasses performed in my coronary arteries with some showing 94 per cent blockage. This happened over 17 years ago and now at 89 years old, I attribute my health to keeping active around the house and exercising regularly. I walk on the treadmill, mow the lawn, look after the garden, and any spare time I have, I spend it woodworking in my shed. Being active has allowed me more time with my family, and I get more moments with my lovely wife Dixie, while we complete 1000-piece jigsaw puzzles, our favorite activity to do together. ”**

**Ray** 89 years old



**For more information visit:**

[www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### ACTIVE AGING CANADA

A national non-profit organization that supports lifelong healthy active aging through participation, education, research, and promotion of information and resources that contribute to their overall well-being.

 <https://www.activeagingcanada.ca/>

### CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ACTIVITY AND AGING

The Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging promotes physical activity and the well-being of older adults through a combination of educational resources and community-based programs.

 <http://www.uwo.ca/ccaa/>

### GET ACTIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire enables you to make an informed decision as to if you should seek further advice from a healthcare provider or qualified exercise professional before becoming more physically active.

 [http://www.csep.ca/en/publications/  
get-active-questionnaire](http://www.csep.ca/en/publications/get-active-questionnaire)

### ParticipACTION GET STARTED PROGRAM

The new “Get Started” program introduces all the info and tools you need to work toward your health and fitness goals—the ParticipACTION way.

 [https://www.participaction.com/en-ca/  
GetStarted](https://www.participaction.com/en-ca/GetStarted)