



The Many Benefits of Exercise as we Age

With the recent release of the Ministry of Health’s Healthy Ageing Strategy there is an increased focus on living not just longer but maintaining health and wellbeing by creating opportunities in a range of areas for older people.

While medical care and access to medical services is an important part of the strategy, the focus is also on developing communities, encouraging active and connected lives and preventative services.

The Healthy Ageing Strategy vision is that “older people live well, age well, and have a respectful end of life in age-friendly communities”, it seeks to maximise health and wellbeing for all older people.

However, adults aged 65 years and over are more likely to be sedentary than those under 65 years. These activity rates decline even more as adults aged 75 years and over, are less likely to be physically active than those under 75 years.

Older adults that are not active are missing out on many of the benefits of being active, and it’s not just about being able to live a full life. There are very real benefits to all aspects of life that sedentary older adults are missing out on through their inactivity.

Any physical activity is better than none at all. It can be as simple as aiming to sit less and get out and about more, adding movement into everyday tasks, as well as seeking opportunities for more structured exercise.

Many exercise facilities, recreation centres and pools offer classes and sessions that are most suitable for the older exerciser.

While exercising can be added to regular tasks, the advantages of getting involved with a facility or group are many including being able to access expert advice, and it has been proven that spending time with others adds to our sense of wellbeing.

A range of physical activities is best, allowing variety and benefits across a range of activity areas. Anything that gets your heart rate up and makes your breathing heavier will have a positive effect on aerobic levels and heart health. Balance exercises will help prevent falls, and strength exercises can assist with maintaining posture and help with daily tasks.

If you are a senior and new to exercising, it is wise to start off slowly. Do speak to your doctor before starting or increasing physical activity. They are likely to be supportive of your increased activity, and can offer advice on making sure any medical conditions or injuries are managed.

The Ministry of Health suggest older adults do 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on 5 days or more per week. They have several resources available at their website to help you on your way to physical activity as an older adult.

References:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/guidelines-physical-activity-older-people-aged-65-years-and-over>

<http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/healthy-ageing-strategy>

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NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "warrant of fitness check" that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - www.icreps.org

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Exercise Association of New Zealand - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.*

