

Pacific Regional Centre for Healthy Aging

Staying Active
Mobility Facts
Tips for Activity
Healthy Lifestyle
Tips for Caregivers
Help is Available
Regaining Mobility
Resources

Staying Active

Staying mobile—being able to move comfortably—feels good. And it does so much more! It keeps us healthy.

Staying active helps us

- live longer
- stay out of hospital
- avoid falls
- continue to live independently

It also

- boosts our mood
- improves our sleep
- sharpens our focus...and more

Mobility works best as a form of preventative health. It's something you can do that helps prevent illness and injury.

Staying mobile is for everyone. Although aging brings changes in mobility, there are many ways to manage these. This page is a starting point.

Things You Should Know about Mobility

You can stay mobile as you age. Mobility at 80 might not look the same as it does at 20, but with the right support, you can stay mobile your whole life.

If you lose mobility, you can regain it. If you hit a setback—a stay in hospital, a change in health, or simply a time where you haven't managed to stay active—you can **bounce back**.

Formal exercise or sport are not the only options for staying active. If you have never liked exercise, there's a fair chance you won't like it as you age. If that's you, don't give up. You can stay mobile—you simply need to *move*. See **Look Beyond Exercise**, below, for ideas and information. Also, you can take **lifestyle and health care actions** that will make it easier to stay mobile.

Six Tips to Get Moving

1. Do what works for you and make it fun

Lifestyle changes work best when they suit you. Think about your budget, your energy levels, your support system, and above all, what you like.

If there is an activity you used to like that you can no longer do, find something similar. Also, try linking a new activity to something you already love. If you like nature, join a birding group. If you like music, try a dance class, or listen to music while you ride a stationary bike. Find something you will want to keep doing.

If you have specific needs or goals, you can work with a physiotherapist or kinesiologist. You don't need a doctor's referral. See [Help is Available](#), below.

2. Make it social

Joining a group or having a buddy for activity means you are more likely to stick with it. If you have a friend who is active, ask to join them. Check out your local community centre or seniors' centre. You can find activities ranging from ping pong to walking groups to ballroom dance classes.

Need help finding these resources? Call or text 2-1-1, or go online at 211.ca. It is free, confidential and available 24 hours a day in more than 150 languages.

3. Don't compare yourself to others.

There are 75-year-olds riding bikes up mountains, 85-year-olds trying chair yoga for the first time, and 65-year-olds learning how to get around with a walker. All these people are success stories because they are staying mobile.

4. Look beyond exercise

All movement has health benefits. Gardening, fishing, fixing things around the home, cooking, and cleaning all keep you fit. Things you do as part of daily life, like making a snack, doing laundry, or walking to the corner store or bus stop, count as activity.

Fighting immobility

The flip side of mobility is immobility. There is more and more evidence showing that spending a lot of time being sedentary (sitting) actually counteracts the benefits of exercise.

A 2022 study looked at people who exercised for 30 minutes a day. The ones who also sat for 10 to 12 hours showed worse health measures than those who stood up or strolled around throughout the day. Yes, just standing up helps!

The exercise group came out ahead in both samples, so don't stop exercising. But also, look for ways to do more light activity.

5. Make your home safe

Learn how to make your home safer and easier to move around in [here](#). Just creating more space so you have room to move can make a difference.

Work with your health care provider to find the right mobility aids (canes, walkers, crutches, grab bars, etc.) if needed. Ask for tips on how to use them most effectively. Also, work with your health care provider to plan ways to get around easily outside your home.

6. Use motivational tools

The science of motivation tells us that most people do well with plans, goal setting, and rewards. For instance, if you have a pedometer (a device that counts your steps), you'll want to see those numbers go up.

There are lots of fitness apps that make activity tracking easy and fun, or you can keep things simple with a paper tracking chart pinned to your fridge.

Also, don't hesitate to call a friend or family member to tell them about your latest success. Some people buy themselves gifts when they reach goals.

Healthy Lifestyle=Better Mobility

Support your mobility with the following habits:

1. **Eat healthy foods:** This improves your energy and mood which makes it easier to engage and be active.
2. **Take care of your vision:** see an eye doctor regularly and wear your glasses when you need them.
3. **Take care of your hearing:** get your hearing tested regularly and wear hearing aids if you need them.
4. **Get your medication checked:** if your doctor says it's okay, consider cutting out medication that might be making it hard to be active.
5. **Be social:** When researchers look at what behaviours are connected with living a long life, social engagement comes out as number one.

Tips for Caregivers

Allow the person you're caring for to do as much as they are able for themselves. Notice and celebrate the physical things they can still do. If possible, let them be the ones to get up and let the dog out, make tea, wash the dishes, and do other tasks. All this counts as activity. It will help them remain mobile.

Help is Available

Help is available in your community. You can meet with a physiotherapist, kinesiologist, or other trained health care worker. You don't need a doctor's referral to see them.

They will work with you on your personal needs and wishes. For instance, perhaps you want to feel steadier on your feet (improve balance). Perhaps you wish you were more physically able to get to your book club. You might work one-on-one with them or in a group.

Find this support through your local seniors' recreation centre, ask your doctor, or call 211.

Getting Mobile Again After a Setback

Life has its ups and down. These affect our activity levels at any age. Luckily, there are ways to get moving again. Also, health care providers can help you.

Recovering from surgery and hospital stays

Mobility and general physical health are what most influence how people recover and whether they go home or to long-term care after a hospital stay. But older people in hospital are out of bed only 54 minutes every 24 hours.

In the hospital

Let staff know you want to stay as mobile as possible. Ask for their help and advice. You can do bed exercises, or if you are able to walk around, find a destination in the hospital you can visit each day.

Leaving the hospital

As you prepare to leave the hospital, your health care team will work with you to create a discharge plan. Once back home, follow the discharge plan. And don't be shy to ask the people in your life to help keep you active!

Looking for inspiration? [Read about 90-year-old Solange Lemieux](#). Just weeks after emergency surgery for bowel obstruction, she was back home and feeling as healthy and able as ever. This didn't happen by luck. Solange took part in a trial program which focuses on bed mobility, balance, walking, and climbing stairs while in hospital.

Similar hospital programs have led to 19% fewer major complications and deaths for patients who participated.

Based on her experience, Solange says, "Too many people seem to think, I'm old, I can't do this. And they seem to lean back and slow down. I think people think about the future too much. You have to work from day to day."

Getting moving after a pause

A vacation, a change in the weather, or something as simple as an exercise class being cancelled or a walking buddy moving away can mess up your routine. Don't give up! Look for a new class, or a new buddy. Switch activities. Or you may simply need to start again, but slowly. No matter what, moving will help you stay healthy and feel good.

Resources

Websites, Booklets, Infosheets

[24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults aged 65+](#)

Short but full of great information from ParticipAction and the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. Click on 'Resources' to find easy-to-use infographics.

[24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults aged 18 - 64](#)

Short but full of great information. Click on 'Resources' to find easy-to-use infographics.

[Guide to Exercise from Osteoporosis Canada](#)

[Inactivity Prevention Package](#) 15 exercises, with diagrams and clear, simple explanations on how to do them correctly and safely

[Your Plan to Get Active Everyday!](#)

This 32-page booklet from the Heart and Stroke Foundation has information for all-ages. It offers tips on how to sit less, how to make an activity plan, and an activity log.

Tip sheets

[Aerobic Fitness for Older Adults](#)

[Strength Training for Older Adults](#)

[Active Aging Canada Tip Sheets](#)

Phone or Email

811 [HealthLinkBC](#)

Call 8-1-1 (or 7-1-1 for the deaf and hard of hearing) toll-free in B.C. to talk to a qualified exercise professional for free. Ask questions and get advice about physical activity and advice. Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time. Translation services available in more than 130 languages.

You can also connect with HealthLinkBC's qualified exercise professionals [by email](#).

Classes

[Osteofit and Get Up and Go classes](#) Fall prevention classes offered in various community and recreation centres in B.C.

Resources for Indigenous and First Nations Peoples

[Be Active—First Nations Health Authority](#)

Exercise programs, contact to many First Nations sports clubs and associations (golf, soccer, canoeing, and more), links for more information.

[ISPARC Move | Play | Compete – Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Council](#)