

Healthy and active ageing

What is healthy and active ageing?

Over recent years, our health knowledge has developed to understand that as people age, the more they are able to maintain their physical, mental and emotional health, the better it is for their overall health and wellbeing.

Keeping physically active

We know it makes sense – you need to ‘use it, or lose it.’ As people age, physical activity often decreases for many reasons. We might think we’re ‘too old’. With lifestyle changes, we may simply not be as busy as we once were. We might also think – after working hard for years – it’s time for a rest! Without realising it, everyday activity has decreased.

Keeping active is also a great way to improve mood. It doesn’t need to be a session at the gym – walking or gardening are great ways to maintain physical condition. For older people, physical activity can have many benefits:

- Physical activity increases strength and can help prevent falls.
- Maintaining strength can help prevent or delay osteoporosis in older people.



- A medically approved physical activity program can help people manage chronic conditions such as diabetes.
- Good levels of physical fitness can help people recover more quickly after surgery or illness.

Keeping mentally active

Just as keeping physically active can help our mood and overall health, mental activity can also have long-term health benefits.

Mental activity can include:

- Reading
- Having a discussion
- Learning something new – whether that be a new language, a new skill such as cooking or how to use an iPad
- Doing puzzles or playing games

While older people can sometimes be restricted in their movement, maintaining mental stimulation and involvement is vital for overall wellbeing. Like anyone else older people can be susceptible to depression and low moods. This can in turn lead to a suppressed immune system and other health problems.

Keeping mentally alert has been shown to delay or prevent the severity of conditions such as Alzheimer's Disease.

Keeping an active mind is a great way to prevent ill health and maintain wellbeing.

Looking after our emotional wellbeing

Maintaining emotional wellbeing is just as important in older people as it is at any age. Emotional health and wellbeing can directly affect our physical health. When people feel down, they are more susceptible to infections. They also feel less motivated and will be less likely to take on something new or to get out and about.

Keeping connected with other people is a great way to maintain emotional wellbeing. Older people can be at risk of becoming socially isolated. If it is more difficult physically to get out of the house, if they have lost a partner, friends or neighbours and it is more difficult to keep in touch with family, older people can find their social network is significantly reduced. This can trigger depression and a range of emotional and mental responses that can in turn affect physical health.

Key Messages

- Keeping physically and mentally active is vital for the health and wellbeing of older people
- Keeping socially connected is just as important as physical or mental health. It can help lift people's mood, enjoyment of life and overall wellbeing