

Benefits of being physically active

Keeping physically active is key to leading an independent life. It doesn't mean you have to go to the gym three times a week; it means being more active in your day-to-day life, every day. Doing a little bit of activity regularly can make a real difference to your health.

Why should I be more active?

Research suggests that amongst the over 50s, only 17% of women and 25% of men are sufficiently active to benefit their health. Regular physical activity, together with a [healthy diet](#), can provide you with a number of health benefits.

It's a good idea for older adults to do two types of physical activity each week: aerobic (such as cycling and walking) and strength exercises that work all the major muscles.

You should also try to break up long periods of sitting with light activity, as research has suggested that remaining seated for too long is bad for your health, regardless of how much exercise you do.

If you have had a [fall or are unsteady on your feet](#) due to weak legs, poor balance or a medical condition, you should do exercise to improve balance and co-ordination such as [yoga](#), [tai chi](#) or [dancing](#). You may find that the GP will put you in touch with a social prescribing team.

Being active will help you to:

- ensure that your heart and lungs stay in their best condition
- reduce and control your blood pressure
- be relaxed, sleep better and cope with feelings of stress
- increase your energy levels
- strengthen your bones and muscles
- reduce the risk of cancer
- maintain a healthy weight
- improve your flexibility, balance and co-ordination
- improve your posture
- increase your ability to remain independent in later life
- delay the signs of ageing
- get out and meet people

If you haven't been very active for a while, it is best to check with your GP or practice nurse before becoming more active, particularly if you have any problems with your [blood pressure](#) or

have a medical condition such as diabetes, heart disease or breathing problems.

How can I be more active?

You might like to incorporate more activities into your day. Walking around the house, cleaning, cooking, climbing the stairs rather than sitting on your sofa is a good start. You could try gardening each day, dusting and stretching – don't forget you can do chair-based stretches too. Some hobbies may also get you moving around each day.

It's a good idea to start exercising gently and then to build up what you are doing. Your body will then get used to being more active, and you are far less likely to strain your muscles.

If you are going to exercise – always stretch and warm up thoroughly by gradually easing your body into activity for the first few minutes. If you experience pain or discomfort, you must stop straightaway.

See the [CMO guidance on being active](#).

See our section on [Fitness](#) for specific exercise and read more about [GP social prescribing](#).

Local Help

Services such as [Ways to Wellness](#) and [Community Wellbeing Pathfinder service](#) can help you be more active together:

To do this they can also help you:

- build social contacts and help with loneliness
- introduce you to local groups and activities
- signpost to specialist services and support
- healthy eating and living information
- welfare support and signposting

[WinG Outdoor Club](#) is an outdoor education activity club that offers outdoor activities to a range of client groups from the Tyne and Wear area.

[The Comfrey Project](#) works with refugees and asylum seekers on allotment sites across Newcastle and Gateshead with the aim of improving their conditions of life and general wellbeing.

[Age UK Gateshead](#) offer the ActivAge activities in Newcastle.

[Healthworks](#) offer a range of fitness classes, gym facilities and healthy living advice and support.

Read more about [Physical and leisure activities](#)

[Healthworks](#), [Reading for Wellbeing Newcastle](#), [Dwellbeing Shieldfield Ramblers](#) and other organisations offer health walks or wellbeing walks. These are guided walks open to anyone with a chance to socialise, chat, get out in nature and listen to audiobooks.

Read more about [Walking, running and health](#)

Leisure centres offer many ways to be physically active. They can offer discounts for some people such as those with a low income or refugee and asylum seekers.

Read more about [Swimming Pools in Newcastle](#) [Leisure Centres in Newcastle](#)

Other useful information

- [Healthy Living](#) – guide from Age UK
- [Hobbies](#)
- [Walk for Life](#) is an App with guided walks and distances as well as local walking groups

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Useful Organisations

Healthworks

Email: enquiries@hwn.org.uk

Website: <https://www.healthworksne.org.uk/>

Telephone: 0191 272 4244

Address: Health Resource Centre, NE4 8BE

NHS

Website: www.nhs.uk

Telephone: 0191 272 4244

SwimNE

Email: hello@swimne.co.uk

Website: www.swimne.co.uk

Telephone: 0191 281 7678

The Comfrey Project

Email: info@thecomfreyproject.org.uk

Website: www.thecomfreyproject.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 447 7801

Address: Windmill Hills Centre, NE8 1QB

Ways to Wellness

Email: info@waystowellness.org.uk

Website: <http://waystowellness.org.uk>

Telephone: 0191 816 3540

Address: Ways to Wellness, NE1 3RH

Age UK Gateshead in Newcastle

Email: advice@ageukgateshead.org.uk

Website: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/gateshead/>

Telephone: 0191 477 3559

Address: Age UK Gateshead, NE8 1BX

Groundwork North East and Cumbria

Email: north.east@groundwork.org.uk

Website: <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/north-east-and-cumbria/>

Telephone: 01388 662 666

Address: Groundwork NE and Cumbria, DL5 6ZE

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