

# Helpful Hints for Active Living

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## Benefits of regular physical activity

Here are some of the ways that regular, proper physical activity can help you feel better. It can help you:

- breathe and sleep better
- keep your bones and muscles strong
- prevent constipation
- manage your weight
- reduce back pain and other joint pain
- bring down high blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure
- improve your blood circulation and reduce swelling in your feet and legs
- clear your mind and reduce stress.

## Making physical activity safe and comfortable

- **Ask your doctor or a physiotherapist** if you are not sure what kind of physical activity, or how much, is safe for you.
- **Start off slowly and gradually do more.** At first, any kind of physical activity may cause you to be a little tired or stiff. This is normal. Don't give up, keep going and over time you will feel yourself getting a bit stronger.



- If the physical activity becomes uncomfortable, slow down. Tell your home care worker or doctor if you've had any unusual pain when doing an activity.
- When you exercise don't forget to breath deeply.
- Breathe out while doing the hardest part of the exercise.
- Wear comfortable shoes that are well-padded, well-fitted and have good grip when walking. Loose slippers are a poor choice. Check to make sure that there are no loose rugs that might cause you to trip. If it is slippery, walk with a friend, family member or Home Care worker. You may want to get a pair of spike soles to put on the bottom of your boots or shoes for winter walking. You can also get an add-on to the bottom of your cane to make it safer on ice.
- Make sure exercise equipment is in good condition. A treadmill should stop by itself if you fall off.
- You might want to use an exercise video made especially for seniors, or one that is for wheel chair users.
- Play some music or turn on the radio, while you exercise.

## **Physical activity for you**

There are many kinds of physical activity. Do what feels good for you. Stop the activity if there is a lot of pain.

### **Activities in your home**

Doing as many household chores as you can, helps your joints and muscles.

### **Walking is one of the best kinds of physical activity**

Take your cane, crutches or walker, and take your time. Walk in your apartment or house, or walk up and down the halls. Walk on a treadmill. Go for a short walk around the block if you can manage it. Walk in a community hall or shopping mall. Support from a shopping cart may make walking easier.

### **Moving in your wheelchair**

If you use an arm-powered wheelchair, then wheel around your apartment or home and down your halls. Handi-transit can help you to get out to a mall. Using a wheelchair is good exercise for your upper body and your heart.

### **Swimming**

This is very good if you have painful knees or hips. In the water, your body weighs less and you can move easier. If you don't know how to swim, you can still walk or exercise in the water. You might want to join a senior's swim or exercise class.

### **Exercise bicycle or treadmill**

If you have one, get it out and use it. Even five minutes a day can help.

### **Exercise for limbs that are paralyzed**

Exercising paralyzed limbs is very important. Arrange for a friend, family member, physiotherapist or your Home Care worker to help you with exercises.

### **Exercises to do while sitting or lying down**

Exercises can be done while sitting in a wheelchair or chair or lying down. If exercises are difficult to do on your own, ask for help. For example, someone else could hold your leg above and below your knee and help you gently move your leg. For the most benefit, do the exercises more often.

Follow Canada's Food Guide to  
Physical Activity for Older Adults.