

Ways to put more spring in your step

Age is no barrier to staying active. People once thought it was natural to slow down and do less as we get older. But now we know the more we do, the better we feel. To maintain physical and mental health, we need to stay active. And the good news is, it's never too late to start.

A happier you. By keeping active you'll suffer less stress, have more energy, get a better night's sleep, feel better in yourself, enjoy life more and make the most of social opportunities.

A healthier you. By keeping active you'll have healthier bones and muscles, run less risk of falling and fracturing bones, have a healthier heart and blood pressure, reduce your risk of developing diseases like diabetes, colon cancer and stroke and maintain your ability to live independently.

Here are a few ways you can keep fit without radically changing your lifestyle.

- **See physical activity as an opportunity, not an inconvenience.** The human body was designed to move, so the message is, stay active for a healthy mind and body.
- **Consult an expert.** If you are just starting your physical activity program, it's a good idea to check with your doctor or health practitioner first. Moderate activities such as walking usually pose little health risk, but it's always a good idea to check first.
- **Give yourself an incentive.** We all like some recognition for our achievements. So when you reach your goals, give yourself a reward by doing something special.
- **Be realistic.** Set realistic goals and write them down. Doing this with a friend or family member can help you keep on track.
- **Be prepared.** Wear comfortable clothing that is loose fitting and light in weight. Shoes also should be comfortable and well cushioned.
- **Warm up before physical activity.** To avoid injuries, include warm up time at the beginning of your activity program. Start slowly and gradually pick up the pace.
- **Find 30 minutes every day.** All it takes is 30 minutes a day, preferably every day. Work out your own 30 minute moderate physical activity routine. Brisk walking in 10 minute bursts will do for a start.
- **Keep hydrated.** Make sure you drink water before, during and after your activity.
- **Warm down after physical activity.** As you complete your program, cool down your muscles by slowing the pace before stopping.



- **Build up slowly.** 30 minutes every day is the goal for good health, but if you haven't been active for a while aim towards achieving this goal over time.
- **Keep it interesting.** Bush walking, visiting parks with friends or family, a picnic, visiting old friends, helping with community events, a trip to a market or a stroll to the next door neighbour's for a hand of cards. It's great if you can combine a social occasion with some fresh air and physical activity.
- **Bend and stretch.** Add some stretching exercises to your morning routine. This will help keep your joints flexible and help you move with more freedom and comfort. Think about joining a t'ai chi or yoga class or taking up swimming, lawn bowls or bocce.
- **Keep busy around the house.** Housework is ideal for some easy bending and stretching. There are also plenty of things in the garden such as weeding and mowing lawns to keep you moving.
- **Make it fun.** Decide on a program that includes being active every day and includes activities that you like. Invite others to join in.
- **Park further away.** If possible, leave your car a little further away from the shops. It's often easier to park and you will get a gentle workout.
- **Walk the dog.** Rather than just letting your dog out in the backyard, walk it to a park or around the block a few times. Better still, ask a family member or neighbour to join you.
- **Build up your strength.** Consider including two or three strength building activities and balance exercises into your routine every week. Carry a bag of groceries. Do chair exercises, wall push-ups and arm curls using weights or food cans.
- **Find strength in numbers.** Physical activity is something you can enjoy on your own. But it's also a great family or social opportunity. Many people find it easier to be active in a group at a set time and place and it's a good way to maintain your enthusiasm.
- **Schedule an activity routine every weekend.** For example, plan a series of walks every Saturday or Sunday.
- **Take up Tango.** Dancing is a great way to keep active with friends and family. Try some new dance steps like salsa, ballroom or jive.
- **Get off the tram a stop early.** Two or three stops early if you're feeling energetic.
- **Fetch the paper.** The walk to and from the newsagent each morning will get you off to a great start.
- **Record your progress.** Keep a diary of your program and record your progress and any changes you notice. If you miss an activity, don't give up, just pick up from where you left off.

If you'd like any more information, tips or advice on increasing physical activity throughout your day visit www.beactive.com.au