

Well for Life

A healthy approach to ageing

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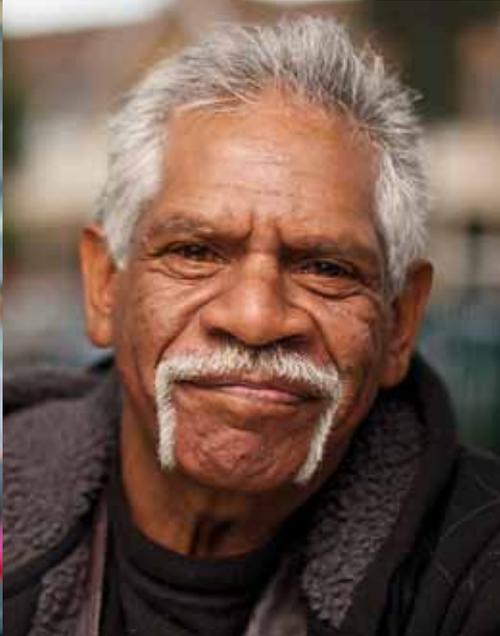
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Well for life

This booklet is for older people who want to follow a healthy approach to ageing in their everyday lives.

In Australia the number of people over 65 is growing quickly. Many people lead full and productive lives well into their 80s and 90s.

Research shows the earlier you commit to a healthy lifestyle, the better your chances of ageing well. And the more physically active and connected with others you are, the better you can feel regardless of age, even if you have some health issues.

The stories and information in this booklet show the importance of health and wellbeing as you grow older. For more information, see the list of organisations on the final page.



Participating and learning with others

You are never too old to play and enjoy life. Adapting to change, joining in with others and having friends are all important for ageing well.

You might want to try something you always wanted to do but did not have time in earlier phases of your life. This could be volunteering, playing an instrument, learning a new language, developing your computer skills or engaging in a creative activity.

It may feel hard at first but learning a new skill is also good for your brain function and can protect you against dementia. A new skill such as singing is a form of physical activity too; it involves standing, breathing and moving, which all burn energy.

Anna joined in with her community, enjoyed singing with the choir and made new friends.



Anna's group

I made the decision to move to Melbourne to be closer to my son and grandchildren 12 months after my husband died. It had been a very hard year but with encouragement I finally decided to give city life a try. My new neighbour who is also a widow suggested I come along to the local community choir with her. I have always loved music but was rather shy about singing in public.

We sing, learn and laugh together, it is such a mixed group of people and ages. Some of the music is hard to learn but Jo the choir leader is a great teacher. It was strange and new at first but I have grown to love Wednesday evenings and try not to miss choir. It gives me a great sense of joy every week and I am very pleased that I have made some new friends.



Jack's journey

After a stroke and five weeks in hospital I was moved to the rehabilitation unit. A walking path and garden had just been built to encourage patients and staff to spend more time outdoors.

As part of my rehab I signed up for the walking program even though I still needed a walking frame at the time. My only goal was to go home. So every day that I possibly could I walked and we recorded the distance that I travelled. Each week I was able to walk further. The staff encouraged me.

During that time I ate better than I had eaten for years, three good meals every day and snacks in between. Over two months I gained weight and my strength and balance improved so much that I was able to start using a walking stick.

I am very pleased to say I am now back home with my dog Rocco, managing well with council support, and I have joined a local walking group.

Jack had a purpose and was active every day he was in the rehabilitation unit. He stayed motivated by looking forward to returning to his home and his trusted companion.



Being active

Fitness levels and physical ability vary from person to person.

You become less fit if you have not been active for a while, or if you have health problems or have been unwell. Start slowly and build up gradually.

It's important to do regular exercise to maintain fitness, strength and balance. Even a few days of not being active can lead to some physical decline, especially in older people. Doing some activity is better than doing none.

Physical activity guidelines encourage older people to undertake 30 minutes of medium intensity exercise each day. This means increasing your heart rate to a level where you can talk but not sing, and it can be done as three lots of ten minutes each day.

You should do a range of activities each week to improve:

Fitness for your heart and lungs (water exercises, swimming, dancing, fast walking and cycling)

Strength for muscle tone and bone density (lifting and carrying weights, climbing stairs, squats, side leg raises)

Balance for keeping stable (reaching to the front and to the side, balancing on one foot or your toes with a chair nearby for support, tai chi)

Flexibility for your whole body (yoga, stretching exercises).

For some, exercising alone can be challenging. It can be more fun to get involved in community, team or group activities with others. You could try lawn bowls, golf, walking groups or exercise classes.

Finding the **right activity for you** means you are more likely to keep it up.

Day-to-day activities can contribute to the 30-minute target. Things like hanging the washing out, carrying the shopping, sweeping floors and doing jobs in the garden are all forms of physical activity.

Being physically active is good for your body, your mind, your health and your mood.



Be sure to drink enough water when doing physical activity and listen to what your body tells you. A day of rest after hot weather or very strenuous physical activity is a sensible course of action.

You can still be active, even if your mobility is limited or impaired due to arthritis or other health conditions. Chair-based exercise, assisted walking and standing or water exercise may be good options for you.

Falls and fractures cause health complications for older people so it is important to be conscious of safety when you move around your home and the community. A physiotherapist or GP can advise on individual physical activity programs. An occupational therapist can advise on making your home safer to help prevent falls.

Regular physical activity can help you sleep better, stimulate your appetite and may reduce your risk of heart disease, dementia and falls.

And it's much better for your health if you don't smoke!

Eating well

Older people need to eat a balanced diet for health and vitality.

Eating a variety of nutritious foods can improve energy levels and help to maintain a healthy weight. Good nutrition and regular meals combined with physical activity can increase strength and help fight infection.

Everyone needs six to eight cups of fluid every day in both hot and cold weather. You should eat three meals (and snacks) from the five main food groups each day.

The five food groups are: vegetables, fruit, lean meats and fish, dairy, grains and cereals.

Eat less foods that have a lot of saturated fat (like biscuits, pastries, fast foods), salty foods and drinks, and foods high in sugar.

A maximum of two standard alcoholic drinks a day is the recommendation for healthy older people. You should have at least one alcohol-free day a week.

Recommended average daily number of serves from each of the five food groups					
	Vegetables & legumes/ beans	Fruit	Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain	Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds, and legumes/ beans	Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/ or alternatives (mostly reduced fat)
Men aged 70+	5 serves	2 serves	4.5 serves	2.5 serves	3.5 serves
Women aged 70+	5 serves	2 serves	3 serves	2 serves	4 serves

A serve is one slice of bread, one piece of fruit, ½ cup cooked vegetable, 2 slices of cheese, 80 g cooked chicken or equivalents

Meal times should be enjoyable whether you live at home or in an aged care facility. If you are unwell, you may need some help to meet your nutritional needs.

It is better to eat protein (meat and fish) and dairy (yoghurt) than to fill up on carbohydrates like bread and pasta if you are having trouble eating.

Consider how food is presented, the taste and individual preferences. Great smells encourage an appetite, and food is more appealing if it looks good.

Always prepare and store food safely.

Ask your GP for advice and remember that it may be better to maintain your weight rather than to lose weight in older age.

Sharing meals with others is a great way to enjoy life with friends and family of all ages.

Good nutrition and hydration are vital for your health. Remember to eat better, not less.



Environment and community

Feeling safe in your community and joining in with others is important for your wellbeing. Your environment impacts on quality of life.

An age-friendly environment with good transport and access to services can help older people to age well. It allows you to be active and connected to other people.

Respecting and helping others, and understanding that 'we are one and we are many', gives you a more positive outlook on other people and life in general.

You will feel better about yourself if you find things that are important to you, as well as those that make you happy and give purpose and meaning to your life.



Li's space

After doing tai chi I go to the community garden in the cool morning time next to the flats where I live. I grow herbs, snow peas and beans because they taste better and they are expensive for me to buy. Fresh, healthy ingredients are very important in my cooking. I like to watch and care for the plants as they grow – I water, pull out the weeds before they get too big and fertilise with the compost we make in the garden. The other gardeners grow flowers and different vegetables and we share what we grow. We help each other out if there are lots of jobs.

We sometimes talk about the plants and share stories about our families. Sometimes we don't talk at all, we just smile at each other and work together.

I like this place very much. I always feel safe and calm here.

Li participates and shares with others in a productive environment: a community garden. This supports her needs and her health, and increases her wellbeing.





**Different things
work for different
people. What mix
is right for you
to be well for
life?**

The healthy ageing ingredients

- Regular physical activity
- A healthy diet and plenty of water
- Keeping your brain active
- A positive outlook and having fun
- Having meaning and purpose in your life
- Connecting with community
- Connecting with nature
- Time with people who are important to you
- Good relationships
- Understanding your health issues and medications
- Quit smoking
- Continuing to adapt to changes in your life
- Planning for your older age.

More information on healthy ageing

Better Health Channel www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Seniors Online Victoria www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au

Alzheimer's Australia Vic 1800 100 500 (dementia helpline)
vic.fightdementia.org.au

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636 www.beyondblue.org.au

Cancer Council Victoria 13 11 20 www.cancervic.org.au

Carers Victoria 1800 242 636 www.carersvictoria.org.au

Council on the Ageing Victoria (03) 9654 4443 www.cotavic.org.au

Diabetes Australia Vic 1300 136 588 www.diabetesvic.org.au

Eat for Health www.eatforhealth.gov.au

Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (03) 9349 4122 www.eccv.org.au

Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (03) 9479 8724 www.glhv.org.au

Heart Foundation 1300 362 787 www.heartfoundation.org.au

Life Activity Clubs Victoria (03) 9662 2930 www.life.org.au

Move – muscle, bone & joint health 1800 263 265 www.move.org.au

Municipal Association of Victoria (03) 9667 5555 (or contact your local council or library) www.mav.asn.au

National Ageing Research Institute (03) 8387 2305 www.nari.net.au

Look at NARI's Healthy Ageing Quiz to find out whether you are following a healthy ageing approach and how to make lifestyle changes to maximise your chances of ageing well: www.nari.net.au/resources/public/healthy-ageing-quiz

Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (03) 9654 1104 www.anhlc.asn.au

Nutrition Australia (03) 8341 5800 www.nutritionaustralia.org/vic

Quit 137 848 www.quit.org.au

U3A Network Victoria (03) 9670 3659 www.u3avictoria.com.au

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
(03) 9411 9411 www.vaccho.org.au

Volunteering Victoria (03) 8327 8500 www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au

