

Keeping Active in Later Life



Who we are

Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 and promote their rights and interests.

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

Our mission is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people enjoy better later lives.

We have three strategic aims:



We help older people to be as well as they can be



We promote a positive view of ageing and later life



We tackle loneliness and isolation

How we can help

We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.

That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

Our **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We're here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.



Call us free on: 0800 12 44 222
(Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm)



Visit agescotland.org.uk
to find out more.



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Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, websites, companies, products, services or publications in this information guide does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Scotland or any of its subsidiary companies or charities.



Introduction

If you are thinking about becoming more physically active, this guide is for you. Doing more physical activity is a great way to change your life for the better. As well as improving your health, it can help you to have fun, meet new people, and feel better in yourself.

This guide explains why physical activity is so important, what it can look like and how to get started.





Why is physical activity so important?

Some benefits to physical activity are obvious. However, there are others we may not think about.

Maintaining physical health

We all know that keeping active is good for physical health. It helps to keep your immune system working well. This means you are less likely to fall ill and more able to recover quickly if you do get sick or injured. It can reduce the risk of developing long-term health conditions like Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some cancers. Alongside a balanced diet, it can also help you keep to a healthy weight.



Keeping your independence

Working on your strength, balance and flexibility can help you to keep your independence for as long as possible.

Our muscles and bones begin to lose strength from around the age of 30 – and this can speed up as we get older. We may become less mobile and be at risk of falling and breaking bones. With the right types of physical activity, you can build muscle and bone strength and improve your balance. This helps to reduce your risk of falls as well as making it less likely your bones will break if you do fall.

As well as being important for getting around, balance and flexibility are needed for many everyday tasks. For example, washing your hair, reaching high shelves and putting on shoes.

Our **Keeping your feet** guide provides more information on exercises you can do at home to work on strength, balance and flexibility.

To order a copy, call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** or visit **www.age.scot/publications**.

You can also search strength and balance at **www.nhs.uk** and **www.nhsinform.scot**.





Feeling better in yourself

Keeping physically active can help to control the symptoms of many long-term health conditions. It can also improve energy levels and help with mental health by:

- causing your body to release ‘happy hormones’ that make you feel good
- improving your sleep
- releasing stress from your body
- interrupting anxious, intrusive or negative thoughts

Studies have shown that 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day can reduce the risk of depression by almost half. However, any amount can help. See page 11 for more information about moderate physical activity.

Reducing your risk of dementia

Keeping physically active as well as mentally active reduces the risk of having memory and thinking problems. There is evidence that even gentle physical activity just once a week can reduce the risk of dementia. The more physical activity you do, the greater the benefit.

Our guide **Reducing your risk of Dementia** provides more information on other things you can do to reduce your risk. To order a copy, call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** or visit **www.age.scot/publications**.





What can physical activity look like?

Physical activity is any movement of the body that burns energy. As well as structured activities, such as walking, fitness classes, cycling or sports, lots of everyday activities count. This includes gardening, vacuuming and playing with your grandchildren. Even walking around your home counts as gentle physical activity.

This section looks at ways to introduce more physical activity into your routine. The type of activity that is right for you will depend on your current fitness levels and what you enjoy.

Breaking up periods of sitting still

Even if you exercise regularly, sitting still for long stretches of time can be bad for your health. You should aim to do some activity at least once every 30 minutes. Even gentle activity like slow walking, dusting or light gardening can make a big difference.

If you cannot move around safely on your own, aim to stand up from sitting at least once every hour if you are able. There are also exercises you can do while sitting, for example, hip marching, neck rotations and chest stretches.

Resistance training, such as lifting weights or using an exercise band, can also be done from a sitting position. Resistance training has been linked to better brain health and may also be good for the immune system.

For more information on sitting exercises visit **www.nhs.uk/livewell/exercise/sitting-exercises** or call the **NHS Inform** helpline on **0800 22 44 88**.



Keeping active at home

You may want to build up your strength, balance and flexibility at home. This might help you to gain confidence before trying something new, or it may be enough for you. Being active at home can be a good way to regain strength while recovering from illness, injury or surgery. However, check with your doctor first and make sure you follow any medical advice you've been given.

Some exercises can be done while sitting down, like those mentioned above. Others can be done while holding onto a stable surface, such as a dining chair. Examples include squats and sideways leg lifts. Walking on your toes and heel-to-toe walking are good for strength and balance if you can do this safely.

NHS Inform provides more examples of exercises you can do at home. Search strength and balance at **www.nhsinform.scot** or call the **NHS Inform** helpline on **0800 22 44 88**.





Group activities

You don't have to exercise alone. Physical activity can be a great way to connect with your community or spend time with friends or family. Connections made at clubs and activities can often become the main motivation to continue.

Many people are nervous about joining a group because they are worried about not being able to keep up. They may have lost confidence in their physical ability because of surgery, a health condition or not being active for a long time. However, there are options for everyone, of every age and ability.

Specialist exercise programmes

Many hospitals offer exercise programmes for people recovering from surgery. Some GP practices, health centres and charities also offer groups for people with specific health conditions. They are designed to help people keep active at a level that is right for them.

Sports and activity groups

If you enjoyed team sports when you were younger, such as football, netball or rugby, you might want to try a walking version of the sport you used to play. Visit **www.walkingsports.com**, **www.walkingfootballscotland.org** or call the **Age Scotland helpline** for help finding clubs near you.

You could also learn how to play a new sport or take up a new active hobby. Bowls is a popular choice and is good for strength, balance and coordination. Yoga, Pilates or Tai Chi can help with strength, balance and flexibility. Dancing can be an enjoyable way to improve all of these skills.



Social activities

Joining a group of any kind can help you to add more physical activity to your week. Some social groups include an element of activity through games or exercise sessions. Others may simply offer an opportunity to get out of the house.

If you attend a social group that spends a lot of time sitting, Age Scotland can help you to introduce some fun physical activity into your regular meetings. Our **Body Boosting Bingo** and **Power Quiz** will get you moving and laughing together. Visit www.agescotland.org.uk/how-we-help/health-wellbeing for more information or call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** if you do not have access to the internet.

The Age Scotland **Community Connecting service** can help you to find groups and classes in your area. Call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222**.





Being active in nature

Physical activity in nature can benefit mental as well as physical health. It can help you to feel more connected to the outside world and calm your thoughts. Walking is an easy way to stay active. You may like to invite a friend for a walk or offer to walk someone's dog if you don't have your own. The **Borrow My Doggy** scheme connects people who would like to walk a dog with people who would like someone to walk their dog for them. Visit **www.borrowmydoggy.com** or call **020 3826 8628**.

Health walks are a great way to be physically active in nature while meeting other people. There is plenty of time for conversation and many groups stick to routes that are flat and accessible. **Paths for All** offers volunteer-led groups across Scotland. Visit **www.pathsforall.org.uk** or call **01786 641851**.

Other ways to be active outdoors include photography walks, nature walks and playing golf. This can also offer opportunities to meet others who share your interests.

The Age Scotland **Community Connecting service** can help you find activities you may enjoy. Call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222**.

Volunteering

Volunteering can offer a way to be more physically active while connecting with people who share similar values. The role you choose doesn't have to include a structured physical activity. Even volunteering in a charity shop or making tea and coffee at a social club will add physical activity to your routine.

You could contact a charity you would like to support or check local noticeboards. If you would like some help, **Volunteer Scotland** provides details of volunteer opportunities across Scotland. For more information visit **www.volunteer.scot** or call **01786 479593**.



How much should I do?

Doing even a small amount of daily physical activity will help your overall health. Generally, the more you do, the bigger the benefit. However, exactly how much is right for you will depend on your current health and fitness.

NHS Scotland advises that older adults should work towards doing:

150 minutes
of **moderate**
intensity physical
activity a week

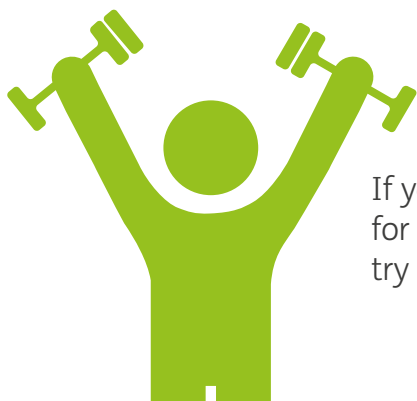
OR

75 minutes
of **vigorous**
intensity physical
activity a week

(or a combination of both)

PLUS

Activities to **build strength**
and **improve balance** such as
Tai Chi, bowls or dancing on
at least 2 days per week.



If you have not been active for a while, start small and try to build up gradually.



What are moderate and vigorous activity?

You can tell the intensity of the activity you are doing by how it affects you.

Both moderate and vigorous activity will make you breathe faster than normal. You will also be able to feel your muscles getting warm.

The 'talk test': moderate or vigorous?

- If you can continue a conversation while being active, this is **moderate** activity
- If you have difficulty talking without pausing, this is **vigorous** activity

The amount of activity that affects your body this way is different for everyone. It may change for you as your fitness changes.





Getting started

Should I get medical advice?

If you are enjoying good health and do not suffer from any heart problems, joint or bone problems, or chest pains then it is usually safe to gradually build more activity into your life. However, always check with a health professional if you have an illness or long-term condition, have any worries about your health, or if you have been inactive for a long time.

You should also speak to your GP before being more active if you have had problems with your eating or think you might push yourself to do more exercise than is healthy.

If you experience pain when you move, ask for advice on managing your pain so it doesn't stop you from keeping active.

Adding to your existing routines

A great way to start being more physically active is adding physical activity to existing habits and routines. Over time, this can make a big difference and can help to build your confidence.

Set yourself achievable goals every day, even if it is just a few extra steps here and there. For example, you could start by:

- walking about when you are on the phone
- walking to the shops instead of taking the car or bus
- using stairs instead of lifts or escalators
- getting off the bus a stop early or parking a little further away

You may prefer to start with exercises that can improve your mobility and confidence. This could be as simple as heel and toe raises while doing the washing up.

Our **Keeping your feet** guide provides more information on exercises you can do at home to work on strength, balance and flexibility. To order a copy, call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** or visit **www.age.scot/publications**.

You can also search strength and balance at **www.nhs.uk** and **www.nhsinform.scot**.





Trying something new

If you can find an activity you enjoy, you will be more likely to stick to it. To find opportunities in your area you could:

- Check noticeboards at libraries, community centres or leisure centres
- Ask your GP practice about exercise groups suitable for your health and fitness levels
- Call the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222** and ask about our Community Connecting service
- Contact Volunteer Scotland: **www.volunteer.scot** or **01786 479593**

Finding activities that are at a convenient time and place for you will make it more likely you will keep doing them.

For more ideas on how to stick to new routines, see our guide on **Health and Wellbeing in Later Life**. Call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** or order a copy from **www.age.scot/publications**.





Useful Contacts

Age Scotland helpline

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter, call **0800 12 44 222** and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

You can call us on **0800 12 44 222** for a copy of our publications list. You can also download or order guides from our website at **www.age.scot/information**.

Paths for All

Offers free volunteer-led health walks of less than one hour. Routes are checked for safety, and walks are led at a pace suitable for all. They are ideal for people who have been inactive for a while, and those recovering from ill health or managing a long-term condition.

Tel: **01786 641851** / **www.pathsforall.org.uk**

The Sporting Memories Foundation Scotland

Aims to reduce social isolation by bringing older people together through a shared love of sports. As well as sharing memories, members are encouraged and supported to be physically active.

Visit **www.sportingmemories.uk/clubs** or call the **Age Scotland helpline** for help finding your nearest club.

Boccia Bowls

Boccia (pronounced “Botcha”) Bowls is played indoors. It is similar to boules or lawn and carpet bowls and is ideal for wheelchair users.

Tel: **0131 317 1130** / **www.boccia.scottishdisabilitysport.com**



Cycling Scotland

Offers training for people new to cycling or wishing to improve their skills and confidence. They also train experienced cyclists to lead group rides.

Tel: **0141 229 5350** / **www.cycling.scot**

Table Tennis Scotland

Table tennis can be played by people of all ages and abilities. It can even be played sitting down. Many types of public spaces offer opportunities to play, from sports and shopping centres to churches.

Tel: **0131 317 8077** / **www.tabletennisscotland.co.uk**

Walking Football Scotland

Aims to promote the physical, mental and social wellbeing of older adults through walking football.

Visit **www.walkingfootballscotland.org** or call the **Age Scotland helpline** for help finding your nearest club.

Netball Scotland

Offers walking netball sessions suitable for all ages and abilities. Their focus is on getting active while having fun and socialising.

Tel: **0141 428 3460** / **www.netballscotland.com**

Other walking sports

Walking versions of a number of other sports are becoming popular across Scotland, including rugby, rounders, tennis and hockey.

Visit **www.walkingsports.com** or call the Age Scotland helpline for help finding clubs near you.



Badminton Scotland

Aims to provide opportunities for everyone to take part in badminton activities. Badminton Scotland's vision is for badminton 'to become the biggest participation sport in Scotland'.

Tel: **0141 445 1218**

www.badmintonscotland.org.uk/clubs/find-a-club

Scottish Men's Sheds Association

Men's Sheds provide a social space for men to come together and collaborate on projects and activities of their choosing. Men's Sheds provide a great opportunity for men to use their creativity while getting active and helping their local community.

Tel: **07397 382533** / **www.scottishmsa.org.uk/find-a-shed**

u3a (formerly University of the Third Age)

A nationwide collection of charities offering special interest groups for people no longer in full-time work.

Visit **www.u3asites.org.uk/scotland** or call the **Age Scotland helpline** for help finding your local u3a.

Borrow My Doggy

Connects people who would like to walk a dog with people who would like someone to walk their dog for them.

Tel: **020 3826 8628** / **www.borrowmydoggy.com**

Volunteer Scotland

Provides details of volunteer opportunities across Scotland. Volunteering is a great way to get out into the community and be physically active while helping others.

Tel: **01786 479593** / **www.volunteer.scot**

How you can help

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

All the information we provide is free and impartial. It helps older people access their rights and entitlements and can be life changing.

We are also a lifeline for older people who are feeling lonely and isolated. You can help us to support older people who need us most.

Together, we can make a difference.



Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- Call **03330 15 14 60**
- Visit **age.scot/donate**
- Text **AGESCOTGIVE** to **70085** to donate £5*
- Complete the **donation form** and return by Freepost



Fundraise

Whether it's having a bake sale or running a marathon, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help us to continue being there for older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

*Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

Please donate today



Complete the form and return by Freepost to RSBS-KEHC-GBBC, Age Scotland, Edinburgh, EH9 1PR

Your details

Title:	Forename:	Surname:
Address:		
	City:	
Postcode:	Date of birth:	

By providing us with your telephone number and email address you are consenting to us contacting you via phone, text and email.

Email:	
Home tel:	Mobile tel:

I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE

£75 ☐ £50 ☐ £25 ☐ Other (£)

I wish to pay by (please tick):

MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ CAF ☐

CharityCard ☐ Cheque ☐ (payable to Age Scotland)

Signature

Name on Card

Card No.

Expiry date

Security code

Date

I prefer not to receive a thank you acknowledgement for this donation ☐

I would like information about leaving a gift in my Will ☐

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE MY DONATION WORTH 25% MORE

I want Age Scotland** and its partner charities to treat all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations.

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I am a UK tax payer and understand that if I pay less income tax and/or capital gains tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Yes, I want Age Scotland to claim Gift Aid on my donations** ☐

I do not wish you to claim Gift Aid on my donations ☐

Date

Keeping in touch

We will stay in contact by post unless you ask us not to. We will never sell your data and we promise to keep your details safe and secure. You can change your mind at any time by emailing us on contact@agescotland.org.uk or calling us on 0333 323 2400.

You can read Age Scotland's privacy policy at [age.scot/privacypolicy](https://www.agescotland.org.uk/age.scot/privacypolicy).

**Age Scotland, part of the Age Network, is an independent charity dedicated to improving the later lives of everyone on the ageing journey, within a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland. Registration Number: SC153343. Charity Number: SC010100. Registered Office: Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh, EH9 1PR

**Age Scotland is the national charity
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Let's keep in touch

Contact us:

Head office

0333 323 2400

Age Scotland helpline

0800 12 44 222

Email

info@agescotland.org.uk

Visit our website

www.agescotland.org.uk



Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today at **age.scot/roundup**



Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



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