

Solutions and Inspirations for Optimal Aging

Fall 2010, Volume I, Issue I

# *Silver Times*

for older Canadians

**INAUGURAL  
ISSUE**

**HOME  
SAFETY  
CHECK  
LIST**

**Cooking  
for one or two**

***Brain  
Fitness***

**5 Minute  
Exercise**

**A Good Mix  
Activity & Cancer**





## Editor's Note

Thank you for choosing to pick up and read our very first issue of *Silver Times*. This is an exciting opportunity to showcase information for older adults based on the latest research, from authors who are experts in their fields. Our goal is to inspire and motivate you, the reader, by showing you solutions for optimal aging.



As early as 1997, the World Health Organization warned that “the greatest health risk for older adults is sedentary living.” This is a good news and bad news situation. The bad news is that lifestyle habits are a major cause of chronic disease in older adults. The good news is that we can change those habits and prevent or reduce the impact of chronic diseases. All we have to do is get up and start moving.

That does not mean running a marathon, but it does mean adding more physical activity into your daily living. There are hundreds of ways to do this – gardening, walking your dog (or your neighbour's dog), lawn bowling, biking -- whatever suits your interests and abilities. We hope these articles will give you new ideas and new enthusiasm for getting more active.

We would like to acknowledge the significant financial contribution from Seabridge Bathing, which has made this publication possible. Seabridge and the Active Living Coalition for Older Adults share a common goal – independence, dignity, and improved quality of life for older adults.

We want to know about the topics that interest you. Please contact the ALCOA office and give us your ideas for future editions of *Silver Times*. Call us toll-free at 1-800-549-9799 or email us at [alcoa3@ca.inter.net](mailto:alcoa3@ca.inter.net).

At ALCOA, we're in the business of promoting active living to make your 'silver times', some of the best times of your life.

Enjoy.

*Patricia Clark*

**Patricia Clark**

Editor

ALCOA National Executive Director



## Vision of ALCOA

The Active Living Coalition for Older Adults (ALCOA) strives to promote a society where all older Canadians are leading active lifestyles that contribute to their overall well-being.

### Editorial Board

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## Contributors

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**Sandra J. Hartley** is Professor Emeritus, Researcher in Exercise Motivation and Gerontology, University of Alberta, and Life member of ALCOA.

**Gim Ong** is a free lance writer. He holds graduate degrees in business, counseling and theology. He is also the Chairperson of the Canadian Bridge Federation Charitable Fund.

**Greg Poole** is the former Associate Director of Athletics at Carleton University in Ottawa. He has extensive experience as an author and public speaker. He took early retirement in 2003, moved to Vancouver and now works as a personal trainer.

**Sandra Webber** has a background in physiotherapy and teaches at the University of Saskatchewan. Her research focuses on mobility issues in older adults, the importance of strength and power, and physical activity after knee and hip joint replacements.

# What Active Living Is All About

## Put very simply; it is a way of life.

It is about maintaining a balance in your life of the physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual.

It is about choosing activities that you enjoy, and including them in your daily routine.

It is about staying connected with friends.

Your mental health is as important as your physical health.

It is about making good food choices.

By maintaining good health, it is about having the ability to make choices in your life, and live as independently as you choose.

Active living makes you feel good, and prevents many chronic diseases.

So why not give it a try? You have nothing to lose, and so much to gain.

## How much is enough?

**How much physical activity do you need to gain health benefits? Here is the latest research:**

150 minutes a week of moderately intense activity (for instance 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week).

Activity can be broken down into bouts of 10 minutes – like a walk around the block.

Start slowly and build up. For instance, just start by doing more of what you are already doing.

Walk whenever you can. Brisk walking is a perfect 'moderate intensity' physical activity. Walking can be done anywhere, anytime, anyplace, without any special equipment.

How fast is “brisk”? That depends on you. On average, it means walking 3 – 4 miles (4.8 – 6.4 km) an hour, or about the speed you would walk if you were late for an appointment. It should not be so fast that you are unable to talk.

If you want to start an exercise program that is more demanding than brisk walking, talk to your health care provider first.



**QUESTION: “ACTIVE LIVING” CLAIMS MORE BENEFITS THAN THE LEGENDARY SNAKE OIL SALESMAN’S MAGIC ELIXIR DOES. TRUE OR FALSE?**

**Answer: TRUE!** – There are so many benefits to active living that at first glance, even the con artist might be skeptical. Nonetheless, active living does reduce the risks of **all** of the following:

- Heart attack and heart disease
- Falls, fractures & injuries
- Obesity and being overweight
- High blood pressure
- Osteoporosis
- Diabetes (post-menopausal women)
- Stroke
- Anxiety and depression
- Gallstones
- Colon Cancer
- Arthritis
- Enlarged prostate
- High cholesterol
- Premature death
- And much, much more.

Remember: *inactivity* is the primary lifestyle risk in old age:

(With thanks to the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism)



## Gordon and Diane Roberts



### Gordon:

"I like walking. It gives you a chance to think. It relaxes you. It's a positive feeling of getting your body in better condition. Whatever the ailment might be that you have, which can be many as you age, you can develop a lot of positive

outlooks just from regular walking." More than 25 years after his bout with cancer, he remains fit.

*Gordon is still exercising at the age of 84.*

### Diane:

"I have been exercising at the Waterloo Well Fit center for six years now. I joined when I was diagnosed with cancer. I was so weak. I had lost 26 lbs. in the process of surgery and chemotherapy for 6 months, 5 days a week, then off for 3, then back on for 5 again. I didn't think I really could exercise too, but my husband was my strong supporter. Now Gordon and I can't imagine doing anything else on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 8:30 a.m. It has made such a difference in my life. It is just part of our life."

*Diane is still exercising at the age of 70.*



## A Good Mix – Activity & Cancer

There aren't many things that could be a good mix for cancer patients and cancer survivors. But believe it or not, physical activity is good for you, while you are in treatment or as a survivor.

Surviving cancer treatments such as surgery, radiation treatment and chemotherapy can leave an older adult feeling exhausted both physically and mentally. Cancer patients can also experience a decrease in their quality of life and physical functioning.

But getting more active has proven benefits for cancer patients and survivors. The research suggests that physical activity may help to:

- ✿ Reduce your risk of getting cancer again
- ✿ Extend the life of some cancer survivors

Physical activity during or after completion of treatment is safe and can help you:

- ✿ Feel less tired & recover faster
- ✿ Have more energy
- ✿ Have better posture and balance
- ✿ Manage your weight
- ✿ Develop stronger muscles and bones
- ✿ Relax and reduce stress
- ✿ Improve your heart health

What counts as activity? It can mean going to a gym, swimming, and lifting weights, BUT those are not the only ways to be active. If you like to garden, walk, ride a bike, or dance – these are just some of the activities you can make part of your healthy and active life. You could also try an exercise class, such as yoga, tai chi, dragon boat racing, walking programs, or many other classes.

First, you need to talk to your health care provider. They can tell you if you are ready to exercise as well as how much, how often and how hard.

Our spotlight article on Diane and Gordon Roberts, both cancer survivors, are a true testament of what activity did for both of them. You too can make physical activity a fun and safe part of your new life. Being active helps all older adults lead healthier lives, including cancer patients and survivors. Start today. Call your health care provider to find out where you can begin, and start to take back the control of your physical and mental well being.

To receive a free brochure on making physical activity a fun and safe part of your healthy life, contact the ALCOA office at: 1-800-549-9799, or mail a request to P.O. Box 143, Shelburne, ON, L0N 1S0.

## Your home safety checklist

*Anyone can fall, but the risk of falling becomes greater with age. Health Canada reports that every year, one in three Canadian seniors will fall at least once. Nearly half of those falls will occur in the home – most often in the bathroom or on the stairs.*

### Factors that can increase your risk of falling include:

- poor balance
- decreased muscle and bone strength
- reduced vision or hearing
- unsafe conditions in and around your home.

We have prepared this home safety checklist to help you think about changes you might want to make to reduce falling risks. Look for more safety tips and checklists in the next issue.

### ✓ Safety on the stairs

- ❑ Do not store loose items on stairs.
- ❑ Repair uneven or broken steps.
- ❑ Install a light switch at both the top and bottom of the staircase.
- ❑ Make sure carpets are securely attached and have no rips.
- ❑ Remove loose rugs or secure them with double sided, non-slip backing.
- ❑ Install solid handrails on both sides of the stairway.
- ❑ Wear shoes indoors. Slippers can increase the risk of falling.

### ✓ Safety in the bathroom

- ❑ Use a rubber bath mat for the tub and shower. Install the mat when the tub is dry.
- ❑ If you need to, use a bath seat in the shower.
- ❑ Install grab bars by the toilet and in the bath.
- ❑ Store items such as soap and shampoo within easy reach
- ❑ Install a raised toilet seat, if you need one.
- ❑ Consider upgrading to a walk in tub. This makes it easy to get in, and they have great safety features. There are also hydrotherapy options, such as water jets.

### ✓ Phone safety

- ❑ Think about getting cordless phones for the main rooms you use, so that you do not have to rush to answer the phone.
- ❑ List emergency number in large print near your phones.
- ❑ Think about getting an alert device in case you fall and are unable to get up.



# Mobility

## A “USE IT OR LOSE IT” PHENOMENON

by Sandra Webber, PhD

Most people don’t need to be convinced of the importance of being able to get around. It’s vital for independence. It means being out there in the community when and where we choose. It means easy connections to friends and family. Mobility is closely linked to both physical and psychological health.

When mobility is impaired by problems such as arthritis or being overweight, activities become restricted. This results in physical deconditioning – loss of strength, balance, and co-ordination.

**Mobility limitation has been shown to be an early predictor of physical disability, depression, falls, loss of independence, and institutionalization.**

To maintain mobility, it is important to stay active in safe ways. The traditional “use it or lose it” cliché applies. Any form of walking – outdoors, in the hallways, at the mall – is a good idea. Walking builds cardiovascular fitness, muscle endurance, balance, and bone mass. The more we walk, the better we respond to challenges in the environment, such as walking uphill or over uneven ground. That reduces the risk of falls.

Any aerobic activity, such as walking, swimming, dancing, or cycling, helps with weight control and improves the symptoms of arthritis. This kind of exercise strengthens the large muscles in the hips and legs – crucial for things like getting up from a chair and climbing stairs.

For more ideas on keeping fit and mobile, check out Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Older Adults, available on the Public Health Agency of Canada website.

### A few more tips on healthy aging:

Have your doctor or pharmacist review your medications regularly. This ensures you are getting the best treatment effects and a minimum of side effects.

If you drive, get your vision checked regularly.

Keep your mind active. Do things that challenge cognition, such as reading, playing chess, card games, crossword puzzles, or crafts.

Try to stay “connected.” Maintain a wide social network. Stay abreast of the transportation options in your community. People who do this have more mobility choices available to them.



### 5 Minute Exercise

## THE SPLIT SQUAT



by Greg Poole, MSc., Certified Exercise Physiologist

### Keeping leg and butt muscles firm

Adults have a progressive loss of muscle after 55 years of age, more from our legs and butt than from our upper body. Mobility and balance suffer, reducing quality of life and independence.

This strengthening exercise prevents the flat butt and skinny legs of old age.

1. For balance and safety, stand beside a sturdy table, right foot forward.
2. Shift your weight forward over the right foot.
3. Bend your right knee to a 1/4 squat position. Keep your upper body upright.
4. Push smoothly back up, feeling the pressure through your whole foot.
5. Repeat this 10 times.
6. Rest for one minute
7. Shift to the left leg forward and repeat 10 times.

Do this exercise every other day or so. Build up to 2 or 3 sets of 10 over four weeks. To progress, gradually go deeper, but keep your hip joint above your knee.

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# Time to stop talking & just do it!

by Sandra J. Hartley, MPE, EdD



SILVER TIMES, FALL 2010

**Be honest.** We all talk ourselves in and out of things. This “self-talk” is part of our psyche’s motivation system. But when it comes to getting more physically active, it may be best to stop listening to your inner voice and “just do it.”

Research on the self-talk of older women found that unmotivated people self-talk a lot, and talk themselves into doing nothing. They say things like:

*“I am too old to be more active.”*  
*“I am too weak to lift weights.”*  
*“I am too unsteady to do balance exercises.”*

Not so! Active older women give this advice: try some different things and find out what you want to do. Then get on with it. Don’t think about it lest you talk yourself out of it!

You are never too old to benefit from simple home exercises or a refreshing walk. If your muscles are wimpy, some 1-2 pound weights could change your abilities enormously! If you are getting stiff or unsteady, then you will be amazed what can do in even one session of moving your body.

Some inactive older women say they can’t afford the classes or equipment. But staying active reduces the costs of health care in the long run and keeps you independent.

Some women feel strange about building their muscles. But from age 30-80, we women lose about 50% of our muscle strength! It’s worth the effort to keep building those muscles as we age.

Stop listening to the negative self-talk and start acting on your positive ideas about doing something active, interesting and fun. For instance, if you’re thinking, “I wonder if my neighbour would go for a walk tonight?” -- don’t wonder anymore. Grab your jacket and knock on her door. And don’t listen to her excuses either!

## GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

by Gim Ong, MBA, MDiv

As we age, we tend to be forgetful. The fear of losing brain capacity & memory looms large for the 14 million plus baby boomers in Canada.

Many of us worry about Alzheimer’s disease, but statistics show 80% of us will never get Alzheimer’s. Regardless of genetics or family history, the choices we make in lifestyle can slow the progression of age-related cognitive decline.



A decade ago, many believed that the brains of older adults could not grow or develop. In fact, our brains grow and change throughout life. Research suggests that learning a new skill, such as playing bridge or chess, speaking a foreign language, learning to play a musical instrument, or even dancing, creates new pathways in the brain. These new neural pathways improve cognitive function.

Our attitudes, lifestyle, and relationships can also improve our brain and memory function. Here are some tips:

- 👍 Think positive thoughts and focus on solutions to your problems.
- 👍 Reach out to your network of friends and family.
- 👍 Exercise to release endorphins and improve blood flow to the brain.
- 👍 Eat right.
- 👍 Learn to relax, and stop worrying.
- 👍 Smile – a smiling person releases feel-good hormones.
- 👍 Hug a lot. It has been proven to reduce stress.



**We do not cease to play because we grow old. We grow old because we cease to play.**

Bridge is an intellectually stimulating game that keeps your mind sharp. It is a game for people who seek intelligent diversions in a social setting. It is both fast-paced and mentally challenging. Each hand takes 5 to 10 minutes to play, and each hand presents a new mystery to solve. It is a great activity for social reasons too – bridge players are happy. When you’re happy, you’re a healthier person.

We can maintain and even improve our brain health as we age. An active mind boosts the body’s immune system and keeps you healthy and wise. We do not cease to play because we grow old. We grow old because we cease to play.





INGREDIENTS:

Chopped red or green leaf lettuce	250 mL	1 cup
1 small carrot, shredded		
Diced tomatoes	50 mL	¼ cup
Quarter of a red or green pepper, diced		
1/8th of a small red onion, thinly sliced (optional)		
Flax seeds	15 mL	1 tbsp
2 thin slices lean deli turkey, or chicken, or cubed cheese	30 g	1 oz
1 hard cooked egg, quartered		
Homemade or store-bought croutons	75 mL	1/3 cup

Homemade Vinaigrette

Whisk together in a small bowl

Vegetable or olive oil	5 mL	1 tsp
Cider vinegar	10 mL	2 tsp
Mustard	1 mL	¼ tsp
Pinch each salt and pepper		

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a bowl, toss together lettuce, carrot, tomatoes, pepper, onion and flax seeds. Top with turkey, egg and croutons; set aside.
2. Pour homemade vinaigrette over salad and toss to combine before serving. You can substitute a low fat salad dressing for the homemade vinaigrette.

**Nutrition information:** Calories: 329, Protein: 19 g, Fat: 17 g, Carbohydrate: 28 g, Fibre: 8 g, Sodium: 435 mg

**Change it up!** Try adding chopped apples or dried cranberries for a hint of sweetness.

**Add a little spice.** A sprinkle of cayenne or chili powder will add some kick to the homemade vinaigrette.

FOR 1 OR 2?

Colourful vegetables, lean meat, and cheeses make this lunch salad tasty and filling. Add a whole grain roll and you have a meal in a bowl!

by Lilisha Burris, R.D.

Leftovers. Again. Meal time in a one- or two-member household can sometimes feel like re-runs of an old television show. You cook one dish and there is so much left over that you feel like you are eating the same thing day after day.

Eating this way does not give you the variety of nutritious foods that is recommended in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. It is not exciting for your taste buds, either!

Here are a few easy ideas for healthy meals and snacks for one or two. Start today!

**Create your own frozen meals.** If you cook a big batch of your favourite soup or casserole you can freeze it in individual portions for up to two to three months. This way you can have an easy meal in no time at all.

**Freshen it up.** To refresh a frozen dish or last night's dinner, add a bit of grated cheese, toasted almonds, diced tomatoes, and fresh or dry herbs. Add a whole-grain roll and a side salad to the meal.

**A new take on coleslaw.** Grate carrots, broccoli stems, and beets, along with the usual cabbage. Combine olive oil, vinegar, black pepper, and your favourite herbs and spices as a dressing.

**Want a 5 minute meal?** Sandwiches and wraps make a fast and easy meal. Use leftover stir-fry or scrambled egg whites with spinach and onions, and roll into a pita wrap. Serve with cut up fruit and yogurt dip.

**Have more ripe fruit than you can eat?** Cut up ripe berries, bananas, and peaches into bite-size pieces and freeze. You can add the fruit to plain yogurt and crunchy, high-fibre cereal for a delicious breakfast or snack.

**Looking for something new?** Next time you are in the grocery store, pick up one new vegetable or fruit that you don't normally have. Be adventurous!

Visit the menu planning section of the EatRight Ontario web site at [www.eatrightontario.ca/en/MenuPlanner.aspx#](http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/MenuPlanner.aspx#). In *My Menu Planner*, choose the *Cooking for One or Two Made Easy* lifestyle goal. There you can get a 7-day meal plan, shopping list, and recipes.

Nutrition Fact:

Did you know that adults over 50 need more vitamin D? Take a daily vitamin D supplement of 10 mcg (400 IU). Include vitamin D-rich foods in your diet. Salmon, tuna, eggs, cow's milk, and fortified soy beverage contain vitamin D.

For More Information:

Ontario residents can talk to a Registered Dietitian at EatRight Ontario for free. We answer questions in more than 100 languages. Call toll-free at 1-877-510-5102. Learn more about healthy eating, or e-mail a question to: [eatrightontario.ca](http://eatrightontario.ca). Residents of British Columbia can talk to a Registered Dietitian at Health Link BC for free by calling 8-1-1.

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