



# The Role of Physical Fitness in ‘Aging in Place’

You have likely recently heard the term ‘aging in place’ in the news. Surveys show that older Canadians want to stay safe and independent in their own homes as long as they can. A lot of factors go into aging in place successfully. They include where your home is and your access to transportation, supports, and services.

Your health is critical for continuing to live independently from day to day. Researchers talk about two types of daily activities:

- 👍 Activities of daily living are self-care tasks, such as transferring in and out of bed, feeding, and dressing.
- 👍 Instrumental activities of daily living involve more complex and mentally demanding tasks, such as housekeeping, shopping, and medication use.

Higher levels of physical fitness have been shown to maintain and improve a person’s ability to engage in both these types of daily activity.<sup>1</sup> Physical fitness is a person’s ability to do things that require endurance, strength, balance, or flexibility – including everyday things like vacuuming, carrying the laundry basket up the stairs, or reaching for items on the top shelf.

To continue to do the things you need to do or enjoy doing, follow [Canada’s 24-hour Movement Guidelines](#). This will allow you to maintain or build your stamina, strength, and balance.

The guidelines say we should engage in a range physical activities that vary in intensity:

- 👍 We should do moderate to vigorous aerobic activities that get the heart rate up. These activities should add up to at least 150 minutes a week.
- 👍 At least twice a week, we should do muscle-strengthening activities.
- 👍 We should do physical activities that challenge us to keep our balance.

Physical activity may support aging in place best when the activity also has higher levels of social interaction and mental activity (tasks that draw on memory and attention).<sup>2</sup>

You can start to exercise at any age. Health problems do not have to stop you from being active! Learn more about safe exercise from Active Aging Canada.

## Resources

Thinking about your future? Plan now to age in place – a checklist:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/seniors/forum/aging-checklist.html>

<https://www.canada.ca/fr/emploi-developpement-social/ministere/aines/forum/vieillir-liste.html>

Learn about how age-friendly communities can support the health and well-being of older Canadians:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/aging-seniors/friendly-communities.html>

<https://www.canada.ca/fr/sante-publique/services/promotion-sante/vieillesse-aines/collectivites-amies-aines.html>

## References

1. Amaral Gomes et al. The Association of Objectively Measured Physical Activity and Sedentary Behavior with (Instrumental) Activities of Daily Living in Community-Dwelling Older Adults: A Systematic Review. *Clin Interv Aging*. Oct 28;16:1877-1915. 2021.
2. Roberts et al. Effect of Different Types of Physical Activity on Activities of Daily Living in Older Adults: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *J Aging Phys Act*. Oct 1;25(4):653-670. 2017.