

## Take the first steps to getting active in 2023

Being physically active helps us to stay independent and mobile. It boosts immune function and reduces the risk of chronic illness. That is why it is so important to do more to meet physical activity guidelines. Then we can reap the many benefits and age well.

Research shows that many factors support getting and staying active. These include:

- knowing and valuing the benefits of physical activity
- getting and staying motivated
- knowing what physical activities are best for you
- knowing how to do your activities safely and with the most benefit
- getting more confident.

All of these factors are part of what is called 'physical activity literacy'.<sup>1</sup> It means we have the capacity for a healthy, active lifestyle. It speaks to how we learn to get more active and stay that way as we age.<sup>2</sup> [Download Physical Activity for Older Adults](#) from Active Aging Canada's website. This resource was designed to increase physical literacy and get you on the road to becoming more active.

### Getting started safely

Ok – you've decided to set goals and take a step towards becoming more active. But if you have never exercised, or had to stop for some reason, you may be asking, "What is the safest way to get started?"

Health problems do not have to stop you from being active. You can adapt your exercise routine for any health issue you have and for your abilities. In fact, regular exercise can help to manage many conditions. It can help maintain or improve your function.

If you are generally healthy, you can begin light activities on your own.<sup>3</sup> If any of the following apply

to you or you have concerns, talk to your health care provider before starting:

- You have not exercised in a long time AND plan to start doing strenuous physical activities.
- Have any significant health concerns.
- You are still recovering from a recent surgery.

### Still not sure or have questions?

Complete the easy-to-use [Get Active Questionnaire](#) from the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. The questionnaire is a screening tool to help people of all ages move along the path to becoming more physically active. It helps you decide if you should seek further advice from a health care provider or exercise professional before becoming more physically active.

### References:

1. Stathokostas L, Gotz A, and Clark, P. What Exactly is Physical Literacy? Perspectives from older adults and those who work with older adults. Report prepared for Active Aging Canada. DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.12517.63209. 2020.
2. Jones R, Stathokostas L, Young BW et al. Development of a physical literacy model for older adults – a consensus process by the collaborative working group on physical literacy for older Canadians. *BMC Geriatrics* 18:13. 2018.
3. Riebe et al., Updating ACSM's Recommendations for Exercise Preparticipation Health Screening. *Med. Sci. Sports Exerc.*, Vol. 47, No. 8, pp. 2473–2479, 2015.