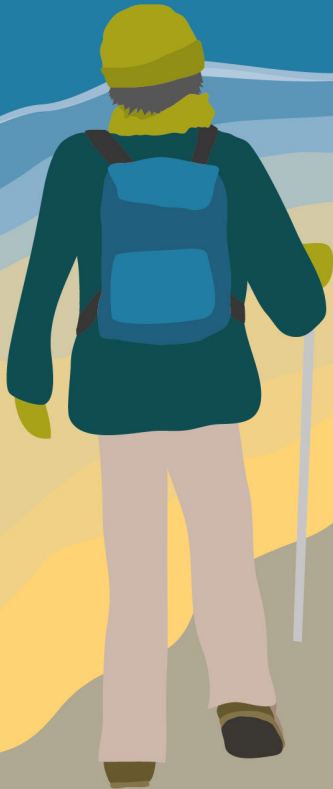


Keeping active in later life



**Veterans'
project**



**UNFORGOTTEN
FORCES**
Supporting Scotland's
Older Veterans



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2020 Edition

The Age Scotland Helpline can provide information and advice, relevant leaflets or the details of organisations that could help you. If there is anything you need to know which is not covered in this guide, call the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222**. This booklet is intended as a guide only. Specialist advice should be sought before undertaking an exercise programme if you have a disability, health condition or have been physically inactive for some time.

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Is this guide for me?

I'm thinking about doing more physical activity

Fantastic, you're already considering doing more physical activity. That means you're already one step of the way along to changing your life for the better. There are lots of reasons for wanting to get more active- to have fun, meet people, improve your strength and balance, lose weight, or look after your health. Whatever your reasons, or if you aren't quite sure, this guide will help you to decide what's right for you by giving some examples of why physical activity is so important. It will also provide you with some ideas for the next step- how to go from thinking to doing and get started.



I used to keep active but don't do much these days

That's brilliant that you used to keep active, it means you have some experience to help you figure out what types of things you might like to try now. Maybe you want to try something new, or perhaps there's a hobby you've got out of the habit of that you want to go back to. Sometimes changes in our health or lifestyle can mean we can no longer take part in activities that we used to enjoy. It can be daunting trying something new or going back to an activity after a long break but it's never too late to get started. Have a look through this guide and see if any of the stories inspire you. There are useful contacts at the back for more information and ideas about what kinds of activities you could be doing.

I'm not sure if it's right for me at this stage of my life

It's never too late in life to improve your fitness or are worried that since surgery or because of a health condition that you won't be able to join in or keep up. Big changes in our lives can cause us to lose a sense of confidence and routine. Or perhaps you want to be more active, but you just don't like exercise or aren't sure what activities there are to try. Whatever the reason you're not as active as you'd like to be, there is something out there for you and there are so many reasons to try it. People of every age can benefit from physical activity and there are lots of options that are accessible for every ability.

What is physical activity?

Physical activity is any way of moving the body that burns energy. It includes structured exercise such as fitness classes or going to the gym, active travel such as walking or cycling, household chores, hobbies or leisure activities.

There are lots of ways to get active, for example, playing with grandchildren in the garden or carrying your shopping home from the shops.

Have a think about times when you're on the move or busy. Maybe you're already more physically active than you think.





What's in it for me?

Fun. Choose an activity that you think you'll enjoy. If you're having fun while being active you will be much more likely to stick to it.

New Age Kurling is a form of the original curling game, but adapted so that it can be played indoors on any smooth, flat surface, such as a sports hall. Players at a kurling group in Midlothian told us why they enjoy the game so much:

“I've been coming to the kurling group on a Monday and the walking group on a Tuesday for 3 years. It's great fun and you get a good blether. It's as much the social side as the games that's good about it.”

Jim*, age 79

“I enjoy the company and it's a wee bit competitive which gets you going. We also have a tournament with all the other groups in the area every year. It's a little bit addictive because each time you come back you get a bit better and you want to keep getting better still.”

Louisa*, age 80

*Stories courtesy of Ageing Well Midlothian. Names have been changed.





Friends. Physical activity is not something you have to do alone. It can be a great way to stay connected to your community, spend time with friends or family or meet new people. Friendships made at clubs and activities are often the thing that encourages people to keep going along.

Susan's story

Susan*, who lives in Moray, made new friends and regained her confidence after a bereavement when she joined a local walking group:

“Joining brought me valuable friendship at a crucial time and made me motivated to get up and out once more.

“I cannot thank the Walk Leaders and my fellow walkers enough for giving me a purpose again, a reason to keep going and try new things. They have been instrumental in building my confidence in both my walking ability and interacting with people I previously did not know but now consider as friends.

“At first, I was slow and would stop a lot. But the Walk Leaders were always so supportive and patient. It was their reassurance that kept me going”

*Story courtesy of Paths for All. Names have been changed.

Learning. You could learn how to play a new sport or try out an active hobby you've always wondered about. It could also be an opportunity to brush up on skills you haven't used in a while and share your knowledge with others through group activities, or by leading activities as a volunteer.

Men's sheds provide a place for men to keep active by taking part in different activities such as woodwork, metal work, and gardening.



Alan's story

Alan* was able to keep learning and using his woodwork skills in his retirement by working on different projects at his local Men's Shed.

“I was amazed at the friendliness of everyone and their welcoming attitude, and by all the machines. It's a great social and working environment. Ideas get tossed around over coffee, and people pass on their knowledge - I've shared how to use a scroll saw and been shown how to make cribbage scoreboards using a drill press.

“It's about meeting up with like-minded folk, sharing other interests, talking about life and families. Some of us are ex-servicemen and can talk about our army days. Every town should have a Men's Shed.”

*Read Alan's full story in 'The Shed Effect' report by Age Scotland

Another way to keep active is to volunteer: to help run an activity, or to support someone else to take part.

Rebecca's story

Rebecca* volunteers with the Ageing Well team in West Lothian, which runs a variety of activities including health walks, Tai Chi, line dancing and walking netball, to name a few.

“First of all, there's the social aspect of meeting other people and helping them. There is nothing more pleasing and satisfying than being given a lovely smile and even a 'high five' at the end of a social with care home residents.

“Secondly, it's that you are helping yourself to a fitter lifestyle. For example, being leader of my walking group means I'm walking in the fresh air and discovering and visiting places that I would not go to on my own.”

*Story courtesy of Ageing Well, West Lothian. Names have been changed.

Why is physical activity so important?

Staying independent for as long as you can

Keeping physically active throughout life can keep you living independently for longer. It can help to manage the symptoms of many long-term health conditions and reduce the risk of falling and getting a fracture. Our muscles and bones naturally lose some of their strength from around the age of 30 and this can speed up as we get older. It is especially important to continue using them to keep them as strong as they can be. Activities that improve strength, balance and flexibility can boost your confidence and help you to continue to carry out daily tasks without needing help in later life

Activities that are good for strength, balance and flexibility include Tai Chi, bowls and dancing.





Mental health

Physical activity can improve your mental health by:

- Releasing ‘happy hormones’ that make you feel good
- Improving sleep
- Helping to manage stress in the body
- Providing a way to distract from and cope with anxious, intrusive or negative thoughts

Keeping moderately active for about 30 minutes a day reduces the likelihood of experiencing depression by almost half.

If you’ve had problems with your eating or know that you might push yourself to do more exercise than is healthy, it’s a good idea to speak to your GP or a mental health professional you see regularly before starting a physical activity programme. If you take medication and (or) have a physical health condition to consider, you should discuss your plan to do more physical activity with a health professional.

To read more useful information on physical activity and mental health visit www.mind.org.uk.

i ● **For information about mental health support in Scotland:**
Contact **SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health)**
0141 530 1000 / enquire@samh.org.uk
Available: MON-FRI 9am to 5pm

i ● **Need help now?**
Call **Breathing Space** for free on:
0800 83 85 87
Available: MON-THU 6pm to 2am and FRI 6pm - MON 6am
This service is for people in Scotland.

Dementia

A healthy mind and healthy body come as a package. Keeping an active body as well as an active mind reduces the risk, and delays the onset, of developing problems with thinking and memory or dementia.

There is evidence that even gentle physical activity once a week can reduce risk of dementia. The more physical activity you do the greater the benefit.

Physical health

Physical activity is a wonder drug and there is no minimum amount needed to start seeing some benefits.

In combination with a healthy balanced diet, physical activity can help you stick to a healthy weight. Someone who is regularly physically active will have a much lower risk of developing long-term health conditions like Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some cancers. Their risk of an early death is also reduced by 30 percent.





Do I need to check with a health professional before I start?

If you are enjoying good health and do not suffer from any heart problems, pains in the chest, joint or bone problems, then it is usually safe to gradually build more activity into your life. However, always check with a health professional if you have had an illness, have any worries about your health, or if you have been inactive for a long time. They will be delighted to hear you want to be more active and will be able to advise you on the safest way to get started.

Your GP practice may know about a local exercise referral scheme. If you qualify for the scheme and are interested in the activities they offer, you can be referred for a personal exercise programme at your local leisure centre which often includes free or discounted access to their facilities.

Worried about losing your footing/accidents?



Call the **Age Scotland Helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** for a copy of our guide on this written in collaboration with NHS Scotland:

Up and About: Taking positive steps to avoid trips and falls.

How much physical activity should I do?

There is no minimum amount of physical activity required to begin enjoying the benefits.

Reduce time spent sitting still

If you are currently not active or have difficulty moving around, a great place to start is to break up long periods of being still by either standing up or moving about. Even if you exercise regularly, sitting still for very long periods of time without breaking it up can be bad for your health. There is evidence that by replacing long periods of sitting still with light-intensity activity (for example, walking slowly, doing some dusting around the house, or some light gardening) can improve overall health. If you cannot move around easily you should aim to stand up from sitting at least once every hour. If you use a wheelchair some light seated exercises are a great way to break up long periods of sitting still.

Be kind to yourself and set yourself realistic goals that you feel confident you will be able to achieve. Gradually build up the amount of physical activity and its intensity.



When you are ready you can think about increasing the amount you are doing as the more you do the greater the health benefits.

Aim for **at least**:

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.





What is vigorous activity?

If you are doing moderate or vigorous activity you should feel slightly 'out of puff', like you are breathing faster, and your muscles are working harder.

Do the 'talk test': If you are breathing faster than usual but still able to continue a conversation while doing the activity this is moderate intensity activity. If you are breathing faster but have difficulty talking without pausing this is vigorous intensity activity. This will be different for every person.

Remember that:

**Some physical activity
is better than none**

**The more you can
do, the greater
the benefits**

**Small changes
can make a big
difference
over time**





Getting started

What's on near me?

There are lots of ways to find out what's happening in your local area.

The Age Scotland Community Connecting Service can help you to find community services that offer friendship, social activities, health and fitness groups and events. Friendly volunteers will contact you to find out your interests, provide you with information and contact details and, if required and where possible, community transport options in your area. They can also keep in touch with calls of encouragement and friendship should you need some extra support. Call **0800 12 44 222** to find out more.

Other places to look for information about what's on near you include:

Your local library or community centre: Visit and ask the staff there about local clubs, activities and events. There also often notice boards with posters and advertisements for groups and activities.

Your GP practice: Speak to your GP practice about your plans to get more physically active and they should direct you to the person in the practice best placed to advise you. It might be the GP, or another professional such as a link worker or practice nurse for example.

Your local leisure centre: If you use the internet have a look at their website and see what activities they offer or visit in person and ask a staff member for some information. Many leisure trusts offer discounted memberships for those aged 50 plus and often exclusive activity timetables for older members.



Try something like ... Paracise

Paracise is a workout to music designed to improve strength and balance. This is just one example of the many different activities that are out there to try.

“Paracise has greatly improved my wellbeing. I have lost weight and my core frame and balance are much stronger. I also benefit from social interaction with new friendly people who make you welcome. Finally, the instructors are super and make it so much fun.”

Paracise participant, age 68.*

*Story courtesy of Ageing Well, West Lothian.





Staying motivated to keep active

Making plans can help you to stay motivated and make physical activity a healthy habit for life:



Before you choose an activity think about your daily routine. When can you fit in more physical activity? If the activity is at a convenient time and place for you it will be easier to keep doing it.

If you tend to get bored easily, introduce a variety of different activities into your routine.



Try out a group activity or join a club. Catching up with the other members can be what encourages you to go along when you are tired and don't really feel like it.

Talk to others about your plan to get more active so they can support and encourage you or even better, join in.





Choose an activity you enjoy or are interested in.



Set realistic goals and keep a diary or a record of what you've done so you can see your progress.



Use a pedometer or an app on your mobile phone to track the time spent active and the distance you have covered with your walks, cycles, jogs or swims.



Take rests when you need.



Useful Contacts

These are some useful contacts for finding out about different sports and activities. These are just a few examples and there is likely to be a variety of activities running in your area. Use the tips in the 'Getting Started' section of the guide to help you discover what's available near you.

Outdoor activities

Health Walks

Health walks are friendly, sociable walks of less than an hour led by trained volunteers. Walking routes are checked to make sure they are safe, and groups walk at a pace suitable for all. The walks are ideal for people who haven't been active for a while, and for people who are recovering from ill health or managing a long-term health condition. There walks are and you don't need any special equipment.

The charity Paths for All co-ordinates the Scottish Health Walk Network.

01786 641851

info@pathsforall.org.uk

www.pathsforall.org.uk/healthwalkfinder

Sports

Table Tennis Scotland

Table tennis is a fantastic sport for people of all ages and abilities. It can even be played sitting down. Opportunities to play are popping up everywhere, from shopping centres to churches, so you don't necessarily need to go to a sports centre to enjoy it.

0131 317 8077

info@tabletennisscotland.co.uk

www.tabletennisscotland.co.uk

Walking Football Scotland

Walking football is very popular. It's exactly what it sounds like – a game of football where players walk instead of run. It's designed to help people get fit or be more active no matter what their age and fitness, as well as supporting people to get back into football if they have given it up due to age or injury.

People who play have seen many benefits: lower heart rate and blood pressure, less fat and more muscle, and better mobility. It's also fun, social and an opportunity to enjoy a bit of banter.

info@walkingfootballscotland.org

www.walkingfootballscotland.org

Netball Scotland

Walking netball is a game of netball designed to be played at a walking pace. The sessions are suitable for people of all ages and abilities and are all about having fun.

To find out about a walking netball session near you or to set up a new one contact Netball Scotland:

0141 428 3460

membership@netballscotland.com

www.facebook.com/nswalkingnetball



Boccia Bowls

Boccia (pronounced “Botcha”) Bowls is a target sport played on an indoors court. It is similar to boules or lawn/carpet bowls and is ideal for wheelchair users.

Scottish Disability Sport is the governing body for Boccia Bowls in Scotland. For more information and to find out where you can play:

0131 317 1130

admin@scottishdisabilitysport.com

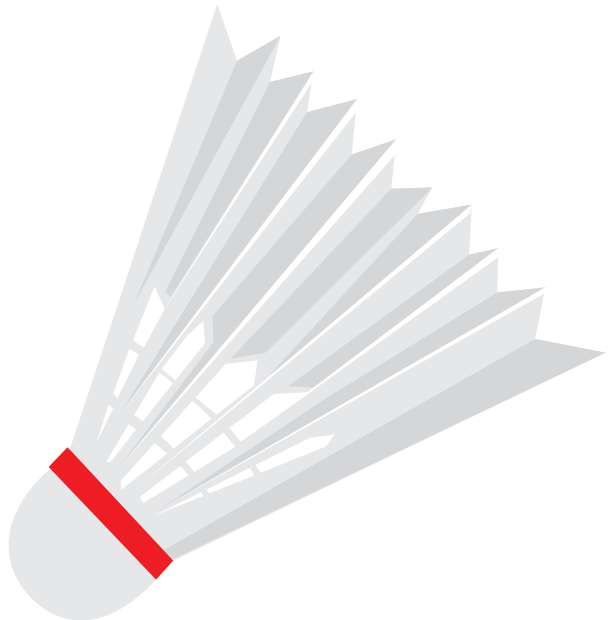
www.boccia.scottishdisabilitysport.com

Badminton

To find a badminton club near you search on the Badminton Scotland website: **www.badmintonscotland.org.uk**

Or contact them: **0141 445 1218**

enquiries@badmintonscotland.org.uk



Other ideas

Join a Shed

A Men's Shed is a safe social space for all men with time on their hands to come together and carry out a range of purposeful activities chosen by the shedders including projects for the local community. Men's Sheds improve men's health and well-being, but shedders use their flexibility, creativity and problem solving skills to involve the wider community. To find a Shed near you visit the Scottish Men's Shed Association website and search for one in your area: **www.scottishmsa.org.uk**

Or contact them between 10am and 4pm on:

07397 382533

info@scottishmsa.org.uk

Bring physical activity to a social group you attend

Socialising regularly is great for health, but get-togethers can often involve a lot of sitting which isn't so good. If you are currently part of a social group Age Scotland can help you to introduce a fun burst of physical activity into your regular meetings, getting you moving and laughing together. Our Body Boosting Bingo is like the regular bingo game but for each number called there's an exercise or activity to music. Each exercise has a standing and seated version making the game inclusive for all. Games typically last 10-15 minutes and can be a great way to start your get-together.

Age Scotland can train and resource social groups for older people to run **Body Boosting Bingo** themselves. For this the group would need to become Age Scotland member, however application for that is free and can bring the group lots of other benefits. To find out more visit **www.bodyboosting.bingo** or call **0333 323 2400**.



**Age Scotland and the
Age Scotland Veterans' Project**

0333 323 2400
veteransproject@agescotland.org.uk
www.agescotland.org.uk/veterans

Age Scotland helpline
0800 12 44 222

 www.facebook.com/agescotveterans

 www.twitter.com/agescotveterans

 www.youtube.com/agescotland



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