

# 7 ways to stay active and healthy in retirement



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When it comes to living a longer, healthier, more active lifestyle, a good approach can often involve easy tasks that you can turn into everyday habits – even when social distancing is on the agenda.

If you're after ideas, here are some ways you might sustain or even improve your physical and mental wellbeing, which is worth a thought, given the number of Aussies aged 85 and over is increasing.

### 1. Get the blood pumping

The Government Department of Health recommends older Aussies do at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most (preferably all) days and says it doesn't necessarily have to be done at once.

As for the benefits, the World Health Organization says regular physical activity has the potential to:

- reduce the risk of some cancers, coronary heart disease and diabetes
- reduce the risk of falls and hip fractures
- ease feelings of depression
- improve energy levels and weight management
- enhance muscular and cardiorespiratory fitness.

If your local gym or aquatic centre is temporarily closed, remember you can still go for a walk, jog or cycle and there's a range of online group classes available.

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## **Stay up to date with your appointments**

While many health issues can be aided by physical activity, you may still need to talk with your doctor, physiotherapist, podiatrist or local fitness centre about the type and amount of activity you can do.

Remember, making time for regular check-ups is a great way to take care of your overall health and ensure you stay on top of any issues before they escalate.

Due to COVID-19, there are also different options for accessing health services. For instance, you may be able to access bulk-billed appointments with your doctor, nurse or mental health professional via phone or videoconference. If you'd like to arrange a telehealth appointment, speak to your GP.

## **2. Eat well and minimise the bickies**

With many of us having spent some time in lockdown this year, you may have heard a few people admit to packing on the 'iso-weight', with comfort food potentially making all of us feel a little better from time to time. Eating a nutritious diet, however, could help you reduce the risk of diet-related chronic diseases and improve your wellbeing if you're living with an ongoing illness.

## **3. Keep the brain ticking**

Researchers believe many supposed age-related changes are in fact lifestyle related. Memory loss, for instance, can reportedly be improved by 30% to 50% simply by keeping the brain active.

You might be thinking - that's not easy when you've been told to go out less, depending on where you live. So, if you're feeling a little less motivated (and like many of us, want to spend less time in front of the TV and fridge), below are a few avenues that could be worth exploring

- Learn a new hobby - YOURLifeChoices and About Over 50s have many ideas, including everything from fishing and photography, to gardening and chess.
- Up your tech skills – There are various community colleges and groups, such as ReadyTechGo, that offer a range of how-to workshops on everything from emails to social media.
- Enter online gaming – There are plenty of online forums available if you're looking to play card games, trivia or bridge with neighbourhood and far away communities. Similarly, there are mobile apps, such as Words with Friends, where you can play with other people.
- Enrol in a free course – There are a variety of free online courses available through TAFE, as well as Open University if you're wondering where to go.
- Go back to work – If you're in a position to do so and you've been thinking about getting a part or full-time job, the website Older Workers may have some suggestions.

## **4. Stay socially connected with people, or animals if you prefer them**

Older people who remain connected with others are likely to have better quality of life and delayed mental decline, while enjoying greater independence.

If you're looking for further ideas, you can check out activities and excursions through groups like Probus, or you may want to look into club associations through Rotary, Leagues and Surf Life Saving.

If you're keen on helping others (it could be at a soup kitchen, or animal shelter if cats and dogs are more your thing), you can also find a national database of opportunities at GoVolunteer.

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## **5. Give mindfulness a go**

The website Smiling Mind says mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity and without judgment.

According to the website, mindfulness is proven to lead to better attention, memory, regulation of emotions and self-awareness. In turn, improvements in these areas can lead to reduced stress, anxiety and depression, better academic skills, social skills and self-esteem.

Smiling Mind is one of many free meditation resources you can tap into if you're looking for tools developed by psychologists and educators.

## **6. Reach out and talk to someone if you're struggling**

Hopefully the ideas above provide some food for thought.

Meanwhile, if you're struggling a bit and would like to talk to someone, you can access free support through Beyond Blue (1800 512 348) and Lifeline (13 11 14).

Source: AMP