



WELLELDER

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A community trust providing specialist counselling for older people from Wellington through to Kāpiti

Keeping Fit for Life

Keeping an active lifestyle in our older years is a key to maintaining energy and zest for life. Exercising and being physically active in a way that suits our level of mobility and fitness, helps us to maintain our health and participate fully in the things that matter to us.

The benefits of exercise for older adults are well documented, and include increased strength, improved energy, higher libido, resistance to disease and to physical accidents, improvement in chronic conditions and reduced blood pressure. In addition to physical benefits, exercise is known to enhance mood, increase focus and help with managing stress.



Older people are a diverse group in both health status and mental and physical ability, but the Ministry of Health recommends that we should stay active, even if we have health conditions. The Ministry recommends the following mix of aerobic, resistance, flexibility and balance activities for older adults:

1. Spend more time being physically active and less time sitting down. Do daily activities such as walking to the shops or washing the car.
2. Aim for at least 30 minutes of aerobic activity which makes your breathing and heart rate increase, on 5 days each week. Some examples are cycling, swimming, or brisk walking.

WellElder provides low cost counselling for older people

In 2018 we held 989 individual counselling sessions and ran 47 group sessions for 317 clients.

- *We rely on a DHB contract to help fund our counselling services.*
- *We ask clients to contribute towards the cost of counselling as they can, from \$10.*
- *Donations and additional funding are necessary to cover the full cost.*

3. Aim for 3 sessions of flexibility and balance activities, (such as gardening, and bowls) and 2 sessions of resistance activities (such as carrying shopping) each week.
4. Speak with you doctor before starting or increasing physical activity.
5. Start off slowly and build up.

Of course, as with any age-group, fitness and health vary from person to person. Some people can be extremely active, whilst it can be difficult for others to move at all without help. If you have a health condition or illness, it may affect how much and

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what you can do, but seated exercises may be an option. Physical activity does not have to be strenuous to bring benefits – in fact, it can be moderate, as long as it is regular. It is never too late to get moving in some way.

The key to finding motivation to exercise, is to find exercise that fits in to your life and that you enjoy. If you enjoy companionship, a “Steady-as-you-go” or aqua-jogging class may suit; or tramping or walking with companions through a Community walking group or tramping club, may be an option.

Gardening seems to be particularly beneficial. Dan Buettner has studied the habits of people who live in areas of the world known as “blue zones”, where residents are known for their longevity. People in these areas have certain factors in common – social support networks, daily exercise habits, a plant-based diet, and also the practice of gardening well into their 80s, 90s and beyond. It is well-known that an outdoor lifestyle with moderate physical activity is linked to longer life, and gardening combines both these things. “If you garden, you’re getting some low-intensity physical activity most days, and you tend to work routinely”, Buettner says.

Any exercise is better than none, so starting with something easy and enjoyable is key. Over time, exercise can help you maintain your balance, strength and flexibility whilst enhancing your mood. So, next time you’re feeling down, anxious, or stressed, try some movement.

Become part of the WellElder community in Wellington....

Signup for information and invitations to events to support WellElder

Name: _____ Email: _____

Donate to us at 94 Riddiford Street Newtown, or by direct debit to bank account 06-0574-0223422-00 (ANZ Kilbirnie)

We are a registered charity (CC31682) – Your donations are tax deductible

