



THE HON JUSTINE ELLIOT MP

Minister for Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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First Physical Activity Recommendations for Older Australians

For the first time, the Australian Government has developed physical activity recommendations specifically for older Australians.

Under the new recommendations, older Australians are urged to accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day, as a slight increase in activity can make a difference to a person's overall health and wellbeing.

The recommendations are part of the Australian Government's plan to promote healthy and positive ageing.

The Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot, today officially announced the *Physical Activity Recommendations for Older Australians* at the 11th Annual Health Congress in Sydney.

Australians now have one of the world's longest life expectancies. The current life expectancy is 81.4 years and, by 2060, an Australian woman can expect – on average – to reach the age of 90.

Currently, there are some 2.8 million Australians – about 13 per cent of the population – aged 65 and over. This number is expected to triple in 40 years.

The new recommendations apply to older people across all levels of health and ability, be they living at home or in an aged care home.

The National Physical Activity Recommendations for Older Australians were developed by the National Ageing Research Institute – based in Melbourne.

“The aim of the recommendations is to raise awareness of older Australians' special physical activity needs - such as balance, mobility and strength training,” Mrs Elliot said.

The new physical activity recommendations include that older Australians:

- Should do some form of physical activity – no matter what their age, weight, health problems or abilities;
- Should accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most, preferably all days;
- Should be active every day in as many ways as possible, doing a range of physical activities that incorporate fitness, strength, balance and flexibility; and
- Who have stopped physical activity, or who are starting a new physical activity, should start at a level that is easily manageable and gradually build up the recommended amount, type and frequency of activity.

Specific examples of physical activity include:

- Moderate fitness activities such as brisk walking, vacuuming or golf;
- Strength activities such as carrying groceries, moderate yard work or taking the stairs instead of the lift;
- Flexibility activities such as tai chi, bowls or yoga; and
- Balancing activities such as walking heel to toe.

The recommendations were endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers Conference late last year.

“Physical activity in older people is important for helping to prevent or manage chronic conditions such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis,” Mrs Elliot said.

The recommendations will be developed into a brochure.

In the meantime, further information and suggestions for how older Australians can follow the new recommendations can be obtained in the *Choose Health: Be Active* booklet.

This booklet offers helpful tips and advice on how older people can engage in moderate activity to improve their lives and health.

It was first developed in 2005 for older Australians in conjunction with the Department of Veterans Affairs and Sports Medicine Australia.

There are 155,000 free copies of the *Choose Health: Be Active* booklet available.

These can be ordered free of charge by calling 1800 500 853 or downloaded from our website at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-physical-choose-health>

For more information, contact Mrs Elliot's office on (02) 6277 7280