

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SAFETY TIPS FOR OLDER ADULTS



Before You Begin the Activity

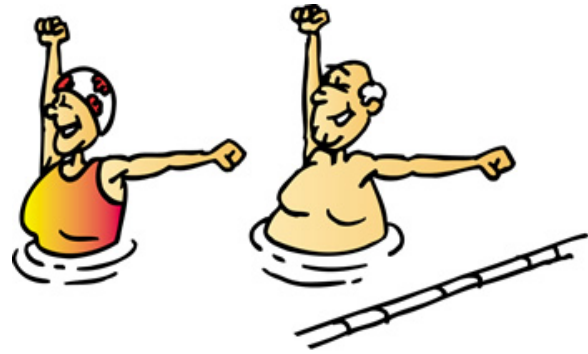
- ◆ Consult with your family physician before beginning a new exercise program or physical activity.
- ◆ Drink some water about 1 hour before you engage in the physical activity and then every 15 minutes thereafter to prevent dehydration.
- ◆ Always wear the appropriate safety gear for the physical activity. For example, if you walk, wear comfortable, well-fitting walking shoes that provide good arch support and cushion for the feet.
- ◆ Make sure you include a 5-minute warm up period. This could be walking slowly and lightly pumping your arms. Remember to stretch slowly. These activities will help to prevent injuries to your muscles.

While Doing the Activity

- ◆ Start with a low intensity physical activity and progress gradually to allow your body time to adjust and to prevent injuries. For example, start with 10 minutes of Tai Chi and gradually increase the time to 30 minutes a day to at least 150 minutes per week.
- ◆ Choose a physical activity that you enjoy doing and one that suits your needs. Try to select one that you can do all year round, for example walking outside in nice weather and mall walking in bad weather.
- ◆ Keep an eye on the weather. On sunny days, wear sunscreen and a broad brimmed hat that provides shade to your neck, face and ears. Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes and reduce glare. In the winter, wear a hat/toque, mittens and boots. In both winter and summer, layer your clothing so that you can take off a layer if you get too hot.
- ◆ To prevent injuries when bending forward, bend from the hips, not the waist, and keep your back straight. Avoid any sudden or extreme movements of the neck and head, as these can result in muscle strain or circulatory problems that may lead to dizziness and falls.
- ◆ STOP the activity IMMEDIATELY and see your family physician if you experience any of these symptoms: dizziness, fainting, nausea, shortness of breath, chest or lung pain, wheezing or irregular heart beat.



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After You Have Completed the Activity

- ◆ Make sure you allow at least 5 minutes for cooling down. This enables your body to slow down and your pulse and respiration to slowly return to resting levels.
- ◆ To prevent dizziness and falls while cooling down from the physical activity, don't lower your head below your heart level. Wait until your body has completely cooled down before showering or using the saunas or steam room. The heat from these facilities causes blood to be diverted away from your heart which may cause you to faint.
- ◆ You may feel some soreness after exercising, but this discomfort should go away after a few hours. You should not experience any pain or swelling. If you have persistent pain, see your family doctor.

**For more information, please call *Health Connection* at
1-800-361-5653 or TTY 1-866-252-9933.**



References:

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults 18 to 64 Years Old
<http://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP-InfoSheets-adults-ENG.pdf>

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Older Adults 65 years and older
<http://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP-InfoSheets-older%20adults-ENG.pdf>

Michaels, E. and Dr. Gordon, M. The Encyclopedia of Health & Aging: the complete guide to well-being in your later years. Toronto (ON): Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care; 2001. P. 32-33.

Tips to Get Active for Older Adults. Public Health Agency of Canada.
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pa-ap/08paap-eng.php>

I've been inactive. Why should I start now that I'm older? Alberta Centre for Active Living.
<http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/our-work/faq/older.pdf>