



National Health & Fitness Day

June 5, 2021

#ShowUsYourMoves
#NHAFD2021



Institute on Aging
& Lifelong Health

Overview

Over the past 15 months, COVID-19 has challenged all of us, individually and collectively, physically, psychologically, socially. But, it has also provided opportunities to think creatively, use technology in different ways, and reach more people. Although physical activity opportunities may currently be limited or unavailable due to COVID-19 restrictions, it is important to keep in mind that being active is important for one's physical, cognitive, mental and social well-being (Rhodes et al., 2017; Yoneda et al., 2020).

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines developed by the Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology (CSEP) indicate that to achieve health benefits (such as a reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, and osteoporosis as well as improved mobility, fitness and mental health), adults 18 to 65 years of age should participate in at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week (CSEP, no date). Moderate-intensity activities will cause adults "to sweat a little and breathe harder" while vigorous-intensity physical activities will cause adults "to sweat and be out of breath" (CSEP, no date). Examples of low-intensity activities include archery, badminton, fishing and yoga; examples of moderate-intensity activities include baseball, dancing, tai chi, and volleyball; and examples of vigorous-intensity activities include hiking, jogging, running, and vigorous swimming (CLSA, 2019; Rhodes et al., 2020).

Prior to the pandemic, only 16% of Canadians 18 years of age and older met the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and were active enough to benefit from regular physical activity (Macridis et al., 2020). An examination of Canadians 18 to 79 years of age who were employed full-time in several different occupational categories indicated that on average, workers were sedentary for 69% of their day, and participated in less than 80 minutes a week of moderate to vigorous physical activity (Prince et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has definitely had an impact on many Canadians' physical activity. A recent survey of Canadians 18 and older indicated that since the start of the pandemic, adults' moderate to vigorous physical activity has



declined by an average of 47 minutes per week; similar findings have been observed in China, Europe and the United States (Rhodes et al., 2020). This same study found that although 32% of participants who were active before the pandemic have remained active, another 20% who were active before the pandemic have since become inactive, and 6% have become more active (Rhodes et al., 2020). These findings are troubling given the low pre-pandemic rates noted above.

From June 1 to June 5, 2021, IALH encourages you to join us in celebrating National Health and Fitness Week by becoming healthier and more active. If you are not currently active, you are encouraged to become active. If you are currently somewhat active, you are encouraged to become more active – perhaps by spending more time overall in activities, or by increasing the intensity of the activities you participate in. And, if you are part of the 16% of adults who currently meet the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, you are encouraged to strive to reach another level.

So how can one become more active, given so many competing demands on one's time? There is general agreement that you will be successful in becoming more active if you:

- build time into your daily routine to look after yourself physically, psychologically, and socially;
- do something rather than nothing; and
- engage in activities that you enjoy, whether that is by yourself or with others.

In recognition of National Health and Fitness Week, IALH has created a series of vignettes that focus on:

- feeding your body and mind;
- improving your stretch, strength, and balance;
- moving by walking and/or wheeling your way around your community;
- participating in active games and sports; and
- celebrating National Health and Fitness Day (June 5) through dance.

You are encouraged to Show Us Your Moves by sharing a short paragraph, inspirational message or photo related to how you have participated in National Health and Fitness Week 2021. Send your contributions via e-mail (aging@uvic.ca) or tag us on Facebook (UVic Institute on Aging and Lifelong Health) or on Twitter @UVicAging with the hashtags **#ShowUsYourMoves** and **#NHAFD2021**.

Disclaimers

The research studies cited in the following vignettes are meant to be illustrative. Comprehensive literature searches have not been conducted for any of the topics.

Non-profit and commercial organizations listed as local resources within each vignette are included for information only. Their inclusion is not intended to be an endorsement either by UVic or IALH.

It is recommended that you check with a physician or other health professional before substantially increasing your activity level.





FOOD for THOUGHT

Gardening in general has been shown to have a positive effect on both physical health (e.g., physical activity level) and psychological health (e.g., mood, well-being). It also provides an overall sense of community (Gregis et al., 2021; Spano et al., 2020). Community gardening, that is, the growing of vegetables and other foods in a collective manner, has been shown to have a positive impact on physical activity, cognitive health, mental health, community support, social well-being, and quality of life as well as fruit and vegetable consumption and dietary behaviours (Gregis, et al., 2021; Spano et al., 2020).

Activities might include:

- Creating weekly meal plans
- Trying new recipes or foods
- Creating a personal or community vegetable or herb garden
- Supporting local farmers' markets
- Sharing meals with family and friends
- Preparing and sharing food communally (e.g., community barbeques, neighbourhood potlucks, church socials)

Feeding your body and mind

Many “age-related” chronic conditions may be evident in middle age, but not diagnosed until one is older (Shlisky, et al., 2017). The World Health Organization (2005) has stated that a small set of risk factors – tobacco use, poor diet, and lack of physical activity – are responsible for most major chronic diseases (e.g., heart disease, stroke, chronic respiratory conditions, some types of cancer).

Fueling your body with good nutrition (both food and drink) is critical for repairing cells and tissue, performing daily activities and staying healthy (Canadian Frailty Network (CFN), 2021a). Biological processes that occur as part of the aging process (e.g., changes in taste and smell, loss of appetite, dental problems) may make it difficult for some individuals to maintain good nutritional health (Shlisky et al., 2017). Further, nutritional needs change with age, and some nutrients such as proteins, Vitamin D and calcium become increasingly important for keeping muscles and bones strong (CFN, 2021a). Supplements may be useful in addressing inadequate intakes of some nutrients, but food-based approaches to meeting nutrient requirements should be supported (Shlisky et al., 2017).

A recent survey of 1,023 Canadians indicated that over half of the participants grew their own food at home, and of these, approximately 17% started growing food for the first time in 2020 during the pandemic (Mullins et al., 2020). Over 19% of those who did not grow their own food at home cited lack of space as the reason. Mullins et al. (2020) note, however, that every major Canadian city has a community garden program.



#GetInspired

One way to get inspired to eat fresh fruits and veggies is visiting local farmers' markets. Here are a just a **few** in the CRD:

Moss Street Market- Saturdays from 10am to 2pm - <http://www.mossstreetmarket.com>
Esquimalt Farmers Market - Thursdays from 4:30pm to 7:30pm - <http://esquimaltmarket.com>
Sidney Street Market - Sundays from 11am - 3pm - <https://www.sidneystreetmarket.com>
Metchosin Farmers Market - Sundays from 11am - 2pm - <http://www.metchosin.ca/content/farmers-market>

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LIFE IN



balance

Improving your stretch, strength, and balance

One of the best ways to stay mobile, strong and healthy regardless of age is to stay physically active. Exercise programs (e.g., stretch and strength, swimming), leisure activities (e.g., gardening, dance), and daily chores (e.g., making beds, carrying groceries) all count as physical activities (CFN, 2021b). Staying physically active helps reduce the risk of developing chronic conditions, prevents weak bones and muscle loss, improves joint mobility, reduces the risk of falling, improves sleep quality, and improves one's ability to perform daily tasks (CFN, 2021b). Physical activity is also important for managing mental health problems and is frequently recommended for individuals with chronic pain (NICE, 2021). A combination of activities will provide maximum health benefit (CFN, 2021b).

It is recommended that adults keep major muscle groups strong by engaging in muscle and bone strengthening activities at least twice a week (CFN, 2021b; CSEP, no date). The Canadian Frailty Network (2021b) has noted that with regular exercise, even adults in their 80s and 90s may rebuild muscle strength.

Although the risk of falling increases with age, falls are not an inevitable part of aging (Government of BC, no date). They are, however, one of the main reasons older adults lose their independence (Government of BC, no date). Participating in activities that are designed to enhance postural and balance control will help prevent falls and improve mobility (CSEP, no date; Zehr & Mustafa, 2020).

Activities might include:

- Yoga (floor, chair, standing)
- Pilates
- Gymnastics
- Martial Arts (tai chi, qi gong, karate)
- Swimming
- Weight training

Do you spend a lot of time sitting at your desk? Check out this guide to chair exercises for a quick stretch: <https://www.healthline.com/health/deskercise#upper-body>

Challenge yourself! If you want to try yoga, here is a guided video for gentle floor yoga: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQwKKCqkJxg&t=1373s>

#GetInspired

Have a look at Johanna Quaas, a 91 year old gymnast from Germany. Watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKDrOWdxLQo>

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DO THE LOCOMOTION

Walking or wheeling your way around your community

Aerobic or endurance activities increase one's heart rate and breathing and improve overall fitness by keeping one's heart, lungs, and circulatory system healthy. There is general agreement that 10 minutes or more of moderate intensity aerobic activities multiple times per week can be beneficial (CSEP, no date). One thing to keep in mind though is that more physical activity will result in greater health benefits (CSEP, no date).

While some aerobic activities may be done indoors (e.g., roller skating, use of elliptical machines), others are better done outdoors (e.g., hiking, cycling). There is considerable evidence that exposure to natural environments such as parks and woods can have a number of benefits such as decreased blood pressure, reduced stress, enhanced positive affect, improved self-esteem, increased cognitive functioning and improved overall health (Barnes et al., 2019; Mitten et al., 2016). Positive mental health benefits, in particular, may be enhanced by the presence of trails, water features and/or foliage (including planters and trees on boulevards) (Barnes et al., 2019).

The BC Parks Foundation (no date) has developed a "prescription for nature" and recommends spending two hours a week in nature (for 20 minutes or more at a time) to reduce one's risk of chronic disease while also improving one's immune system, memory, creativity and mental health. They suggest scheduling "nature visits" into one's day planner and replacing indoor activities with outdoor ones.

Franco et al. (2017) have reported that many of the health benefits attributed to being in nature are accrued through all five senses (e.g., vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch), not just vision alone. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that "nature" experienced through virtual reality may result in enhanced physical and emotional well-being in individuals who have limited mobility or are housebound (White et al., 2018).

Activities might include:

- Walking and/or jogging
- Hiking
- Cycling
- Roller blading/Roller skating
- Skateboarding
- Stair climbing

Local resources:

- A guide to user-friendly and accessible trails in the CRD <https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/parks-pdf/userfriendly-trails.pdf>
- Want to challenge yourself? Here is a list of more moderate-to-difficult hikes in the CRD <https://www.explore-mag.com/10-of-the-Best-Hikes-near-Victoria-British-Columbia>
- Power To Be is a not-for-profit organization that works to remove cognitive, physical and social barriers to the outdoors allowing participants to explore who they are and what they are capable of. Read More: <https://powertobe.ca/>



#GetInspired

90-year-old Nanaimo resident, Gunter Gutsche, proves that you're never too old to have fun and keep fit. Watch it here: <https://globalnews.ca/video/7393468/90-year-old-longboarder-carves-new-path-in-nanaimo-neighbourhood/>

101-year-old Oak Bay resident and WWII veteran, John Hillman, pledged to walk 101 laps around his retirement building to raise money for Save The Children charity. Read more here: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/john-hillman-campaign-1.5555433>

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Games People PLAY

Participating in active games and sports

Sport has been defined as physical activity that requires individuals to “adhere to a set of rules, expectations or behaviours, has a defined goal, and usually requires regular engagement and training” (Stenner et al., 2020). Participation in sport can occur as an individual or as a member of a group or team. Sport has been advanced as a promising approach for increasing physical activity, promoting health, and preventing disease (Andersen et al., 2018).

Andersen et al. (2018) found that psychological and social health benefits related to participation in team sports included emotional social support, a sense of belonging, higher self-esteem, higher self-confidence, presence of a social network, and opportunity for social interaction. The authors concluded that “participation in team sport [may] be more efficient in promoting health and ensuring exercise participation and continuation than individual sport.”

Sport participation typically declines in individuals 55 and older, although some individuals may continue to be actively engaged (Stenner et al., 2020). Older individuals participate in sports for five main reasons: To maintain health and well-being; to be part of a social group or community; to develop new relationships and strengthen existing ones; to compete, both against one’s self and against others; and to age successfully, for example by dispelling myths and challenging stereotypes related to being older (Stenner et al., 2020).

The reviews conducted by Andersen et al. (2018) and Stenner et al. (2020) highlight the importance of social factors in maintaining physical activity. Smith et al. (2017) found that social support from family members was related to higher levels of physical activity in general, while support from friends was positively associated with leisure time physical activity (rather than physical activities associated with household tasks or transportation). These findings suggest that support from others may encourage greater enjoyment in physical activity which in turn may motivate people to be more physically active.

Activities might include:

- Basketball
- Baseball/Catch
- Volleyball/Beach Volleyball
- Croquet
- Tennis/Badminton
- Bowling/Lawn Bowling
- Capture the Flag/Kick the Can
- Hopscotch

Resources

All work and no play? Be sure to check out this help guide that lists the benefits of play as well as ways to build it into our routines.

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/benefits-of-play-for-adults.htm>

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Everybody DANCE now!

Celebrate National Health and Fitness Day through dance

Dance is an activity that encompasses multiple facets. It can result in improved flexibility, stronger muscles and bones and increased endurance as well as improved mental and cognitive health (Schroeder et al., 2017). It can occur indoors or outdoors. It can be done independently, with a partner or as part of a group. It can be used to communicate, tell a story, preserve culture and traditions, cope with loss, and celebrate happy events. And, it can be done by a wide range of individuals – from toddlers to older adults.

In a recent review, Mattle et al. (2020) examined the effect of dance-based mind-motor activities (defined as combined cognitive and coordinated physical tasks) on healthy adults. They found the activities were significantly associated with a reduced risk of falls as well as a reduced rate of falls. The activities were also significantly associated with improved balance, mobility and lower body strength.

Dance interventions lasting between 10 weeks and 18 months have been shown to both maintain and improve cognitive performance (Predovan et al., 2019). The findings may be due to the learning of complex coordination movements, a positive impact on mental health and/or the positive effect of music on cognitive functioning (Predovan et al., 2019).

Schroeder et al. (2017) explored the impact of a community based intergenerational dance program on physical activity levels in children and adults ranging in age from 2 to 79 years. They found that about 50% of the children and 80% of the adults demonstrated adequate levels of exertion (in adults, the exertion level was related to number of steps taken). In addition, the program resulted in high levels of community engagement and enjoyment. Schroeder et al. concluded that “Dance is an enjoyable, culturally appropriate, low cost method for increasing access to physical activity for children and families.”

Activities might include:

- Cultural dancing
- Tap dancing
- Ballet, Jazz or Lyrical
- Breakdancing
- Ballroom dancing
- Folk dancing
- Line dancing
- Zumba



#GetInspired

Be sure to check out the Maritime Bhangra Group on YouTube. This group believes in #JoyfulActivism which means they dance to raise money for different causes in their community while spreading positivity and joy to those who watch. One of these causes is [Feed Nova Scotia](#).

Watch them here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSgOJ7Wj6iTudU9PeqKURhQ>

Want to challenge yourself and give Bhangra a try? Check out this tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTqbZ9rTW2o>

Don't forget to #ShowUsYourMoves

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