

# How Staying Active Helps Well-Being



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The benefits of staying active and engaged with life and how to get them.

Staying active will help you get more out of life at any age. You won't just have more fun if you remain physically and mentally active -- you'll also promote your overall health and well-being. In this article you'll learn about the benefits of staying active.

## How and why activity boosts well-being

You don't have to run marathons or go back to school full time to benefit from staying active. You can promote your well-being by seeking out the types of physical and mental activities that you find most rewarding -- whether you prefer yoga or hiking, joining a book club or choir, going to a baseball game with friends, or visiting a park with grandchildren.

Staying active boosts your well-being in many ways. Research has shown that it can help you:

**Live a longer and healthier life.** Regular exercise can help you delay or avoid heart disease and other life-threatening illnesses. People who have close ties to family and friends tend to live longer than others.

**Stay mentally sharp.** Vigorous exercise increases the flow of oxygen to the brain, which increases your ability to think clearly. Activities that stimulate your mind, such as taking classes, also boost your brainpower.

**Feel more optimistic.** Staying active builds the physical and mental stamina required to navigate work and family responsibilities. It also makes you feel more confident about your ability to meet challenges you face.

## Staying active physically, mentally, and socially

One of the best strategies for staying active is to enjoy a range of rewarding activities. That way you'll have other

pursuits you can enjoy if you can't take part in one you love. An unexpected injury, for example, might someday keep you from playing favorite sport. Different activities also offer different benefits, so enjoying more than one boosts your overall well-being, just as eating a balanced diet helps you stay healthy. Try to find activities that will:

**Strengthen your ties to family and friends.** Aim to get together with family and friends regularly to keep your connections strong. When you can't meet face-to-face, nurture your connections with frequent phone and email conversations and with activities that will allow your relationship to grow, such as taking vacations together, collecting family stories or recipes, and planning reunions with school friends. Social-media sites like Facebook are a great way to stay connected with friends, siblings, children, and grandchildren.

**Aim to get 30 minutes of vigorous exercise on all or most days of the week.** You might take a brisk walk every day with a friend or co-worker, sign up for an exercise class at a gym, or join an adult sports team if you are looking for ways to keep fit and stay socially connected with others.

**Stimulate your mind.** Try to have some activities in your life besides work that stimulate your mind, such as taking a class in a subject that interests you, joining a book club, playing in a band, or pursuing a hobby that requires you to learn about a variety of subjects. If there aren't local opportunities, consider online crossword puzzles or Sudoku.

**Get involved with a group or cause to find a sense of purpose.** Activities need to feel meaningful to improve your well-being, so try to find some that give you a sense of purpose. These may include mentoring, volunteering, or joining a faith-based community or other organization that lets you give back some of what you have received.

## **Staying active throughout life**

You can keep boosting your well-being as you age by taking these steps:

**Talk with your health care provider about exercise.** You may need to replace or adjust some routines to exercise safely as you get older.

**Take advantage of discounts that can help you stay active.** Starting at about the age of 60, you may qualify for special rates on programs that can help you stay active, such as educational vacations, gym memberships, or day trips sponsored by community groups.

**Keep making new friends and strengthening your ties to others.** As you get older, you may see less of some people you care about because they have retired, moved away, or lost interest in the activities you shared. Keep making new friends and strengthening your ties to others so that you will always be able to tap into a

strong network of supportive people who love and care about you.

Staying active boosts well-being at any age. You'll get the most benefits if you take part in a variety of healthy, enjoyable, and meaningful activities.

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