Top tips for getting started

1. **Celebrate your progress.** You'll notice you have more energy, are sleeping better and feel a boost in your mood within a few weeks. Acknowledge small wins, they all add up!
2. **Join a local group.** Community classes, local clubs and Act Now, Age Better sporting partners offer beginner sessions led by trained instructors.
3. **Start small and be consistent.** 10-minute sessions still count and help you build momentum.
4. **Choose activities you enjoy.** You'll stick with a sport longer if it's fun. Activities that bring you together with other people can also be great if you're looking for more social connection.
5. **Remember – everyone was a beginner once!** Don't be embarrassed to start at the beginning. Work at your level and progress gradually. Learning the proper technique reduces the risk of injuries.

age UK
Let's change how we age

Act Now, Age Better.

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Whoever you are, and whatever your lifestyle, there's an activity for you.

Scientific studies consistently show that regular physical activity reduces the risk of long term conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis. Even small amounts of movement can have an impact.

Taking part in sport can be a fun and fulfilling way to move more – one that helps you stay connected with your community and learn or develop new skills. And the benefits to your long-term health can be incredible.

Build a strong body now and for the future

Try: CrossFit, Nordic walking, boxing, dancing

Why: Resistance and weight-bearing activities help maintain muscle mass and bone density. That's crucial for all of us – but especially for women who've been through the menopause. Weight-bearing activities also improve energy and make everyday tasks like carrying shopping or lifting grandchildren easier.

Get better balance and coordination

Try: Yoga, tennis, hiking, rounders, netball

Why: Balance and coordination can be trained at any age. Sports that challenge your sense of balance and require quick reactions help improve confidence and prevent falls.

Stay sharp, positive and connected

Try: Football, cricket, badminton, group exercise classes, pickleball

Why: Activities that challenge your brain and involve other people can help support mental wellbeing. Regular movement reduces anxiety and depression, improves memory and attention, and enhances social connections, which are key predictors of long term happiness.

Boost heart health and energy

Try: Running, cycling, swimming, golf, rugby

Why: Aerobic activities raise your heart rate and improve your body's ability to use oxygen efficiently. A stronger heart and lungs mean you'll feel less breathless doing essential activities such as climbing stairs or walking longer distances.

Act Now, Age Better: Your Next Move

How sport and activity can help boost your health as you age.

Written by
Dr Hussain Al-Zubaidi for Age UK

We're living longer, and with the right choices, we can also live better.

Regular movement is one of the most powerful tools you have to feel your best now and protect your future health – a bit like paying into a physical pension plan.

But juggling work, family and caring responsibilities often means staying active gets pushed down the to-do list. Together with Age UK, I'm here to help you put movement back on the menu.

You don't have to train for a marathon to keep moving. It's simply about finding something you like and doing it consistently.

The benefits are significant: you'll have more energy to enjoy life now, you'll keep your mind sharp for those busy days, you'll improve your sleep and mood, and you'll build a 'buffer' of strength and stamina that will help you stay independent for longer as you age.

> "Because if we act now, we can age better.

In this leaflet, I've laid out the benefits of a variety of sports and how they can contribute to healthy ageing. So why not give something new a go – or return to an old favourite – and make a move towards a stronger, healthier future?

What will your next move look like?

Here, I've summarised the key evidence-based benefits for each sport. Use this page as a quick reference to help you decide which activities best suit your goals – and remember, you can try out as many as you like!

The message is simple and encouraging: moving more, and moving in different ways, can meaningfully support your long-term health and independence. There's strong evidence to show that taking part in a range of physical activities can reduce the risk of dying early – and that mixing things up rather than just doing one activity is even more protective.

Badminton

Provides '**high intensity aerobic exercise**' (short bursts of activity where you work as hard as you can) – great for your heart and your **metabolism**, which can help you **live longer**.

Keeps you **agile** and gives your brain a workout too!

Bowls

Playing regularly can improve balance and **'functional mobility'** (how your body moves on a day-to-day basis), reducing the risk of falling as you age.

Boxing

Builds **upper body** and **core strength**.

Improves **balance**, **endurance** and **focus**.

Easy to adapt to any level of fitness.

Cricket

Helps build **coordination**, **balance** and **stamina**.

Improves strength and **cardiovascular fitness**.

CrossFit

Trains all major muscle groups and reduces the risk of falls and frailty later in life.

Stronger muscles **support joints**, **improve posture** and make you feel capable and **independent**.

Cycling

A great way to prevent age-related muscle loss. Supports your **immune system** to work effectively.

Lowers blood pressure and can help maintain **healthy cholesterol** levels.

Dancing

Improves **coordination**, **balance** and **posture**.

Movement to music **lifts mood** and **reduces stress**.

Rehearsing sequences **stimulates memory** and concentration.

Football

Increases **muscle and bone strength**.

Lowers blood pressure and **reduces body fat**.

A great way to improve your **overall fitness** and endurance.

Nordic walking

Engages 90% of your muscles.

Improves your **overall fitness**, builds **stamina** and can help maintain **healthy cholesterol** levels.

Can help improve anxiety.

Group exercise classes

Builds **muscle strength** and helps you move faster.

Exercising with others can help **reduce anxiety** and keep you **socially connected**.

Mountaineering

Improves **balance**, **mobility** and **stamina**, which can help reduce your risk of falling.

Lowers blood pressure.

Can help improve your **mental health**.

Rounders

Great for **coordination**, **agility**, **flexibility** and strength.

Playing strategically as part of a team can help keep your **brain sharp**.

Sociable and fun.

Running

Strengthens your heart and lungs.

Improves **bone health**.

Reduces the risk of heart disease and strokes.

Rugby

Great for **cardiovascular fitness** and muscle strength.

Enhances **agility** and **speed**.

Can help **reduce stress** due to team camaraderie.

There are lots of different ways to play.

Swimming

Keeps your **heart healthy**.

Builds full body **strength** and **flexibility**, which help reduce your risk of falling.

Table tennis

Builds **strength** and helps keep **bones healthy**.

Good for **overall physical fitness**.

If you have Parkinson's, it's been shown to help improve your **motor skills and balance**.

Tennis

Improves **coordination**.

Builds **muscle strength** and cardiovascular fitness.

A great way to stay **connected socially**.

Walking / rambling

Improves **heart health** and keeps your blood pressure in check.

Builds **balance**.

Can help **boost your mood**.

To find out more about the sports offered by our campaign partners and how you can get involved, **visit www.ageuk.org.uk/actnow**