

Physical Activity Key Messages

Key Message:

It's never too late to start being active.

Why is the message important?

Research supports being active at any age does have overall health benefits and reduces risks of many chronic diseases and helps in the management of various chronic diseases. .

Details of the message:

- Use it or lose it. Muscles that are not used stop working effectively.
- Talk with your doctor before beginning any physical activity.
- Start slowly then build up the amount of time and intensity of activity.

Examples of how to support the message:

- Introduce a 10 minute gentle activity break into activities where there is sitting for periods of time.
- Learn about the Home Exercise Support Program and do the exercises as part of your daily routine. Encourage participants to become active and share success stories.

Key Message:

Follow the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults (under 65) and Older Adults (65 +)

Why is the key message important?

For older adults injuries due to falls can be very serious and can be the starting point for decline in overall health. Many older adults never fully recover their state of overall health and independence prior to the fall.

The physical activity guidelines are developed based on extensive research and provide a minimum goal to achieve that would provide overall health benefits and assist with falls prevention.

Research indicates that physically active older adults have a reduced risk of falling than sedentary older adults.

Details of the Key Message:

- The guidelines recommend at least 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity of 10 minutes or more.
- Moderate intensity activity will cause a participant to sweat a little and breathe harder.
- Vigorous intensity activity will cause a participant to sweat and to be “out of breath” or “huff and puff”.
- Examples of activity are: brisk walking bicycling, dancing, swimming lengths, fitness exercise class, running, cross-country skiing,

- urban/Nordic pole walking etc. The intensity of the exercise is dependent upon the effort exerted during the activity.
- Include muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups at least 2 days per week.
 - Perform physical activities to enhance balance and prevent falls.
 - More physical activity provides greater health benefits.

Examples of how to support the message:

- Introduce a 10 minute activity break for activities where there is sitting for periods of time (ie: 10 min break to achieve moderate or vigorous activity ,10 minute break to build muscle, 10 minute break of balance activities)
- Increase your activity time to include a walk prior to or after the activity.
- Organize a “Try It” week where you could try different physical activities to increase awareness and participation opportunities in your area.
- Utilize participants that have an expertise eg. A participant leads a short multicultural dance routine, lead a 10 minute activity break(like the 7th inning stretch) or provide a “Try It” class.

Key message:

Activity must become a priority and part of a daily routine.

Why is the message important?

Daily physical activity must be a priority. Physical activity is accomplished every day. A routine time for daily physical activity makes it easier to achieve.

Details of the message:

- Physical activity is a priority. Other tasks, visits, jobs, are scheduled around physical activity. For example walk every morning at 9:00am. If the time is scheduled and a priority other life tasks will be scheduled around activity time, doctor’s appointments, or grocery shopping or visits to friends will be scheduled for 11:00am after the morning walk.

Examples of how to support the message:

- Encourage routine by suggesting parking your car further away, walk for errands, and take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
- For every activity that you are involved in, include a physical component ie. Get up after 30 minutes of sitting and walk for at least 3 minutes. If possible try to walk or be active for 10 minutes. This will increase your brain power too!

Key message:

Being active supports disease prevention and disease management.

Why is the message important?

Research states being physical active can reduce your risk to a number of chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, osteoarthritis, diabetes, and some cancers. It also reduces the symptoms and effects of the disease, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, mental illness. Being physically active can help reduce the dose amount or need for certain medications and can make daily tasks easier to perform.

Details of the message:

- Promote physical activity opportunities and existing programming that address different chronic diseases, eg. Classes designed specifically for people living with Osteoporosis, chair exercise classes for people with fibromyalgia, stronger and steadier classes for falls prevention, dancing classes for people living with Alzheimer's.
- Promote daily physical activity as a recognized and accepted method of reducing risk for chronic disease.

Examples of how to support the message:

- Hand out tip sheets specific to various chronic diseases and how being active helps manage the disease.
- Use the health promotion calendar as an opportunity for displaying physical activity for specific chronic diseases, eg. February is heart month identify programs and opportunities that exercise your heart, April is cancer month, promote how physical activity reduces your risk of various cancers including breast cancer.

Key message:

Being active helps to maintain independence.

Why is the message important?

Being independent (or being able to perform tasks with out assistance or becoming a burden to the family) is important to many older adults and allows them to maintain their freedom, autonomy and continue to be a contributing member to their families and community. Maintaining physical health has positive impact mental health and self esteem.

Details of the message:

- Independence means not having to rely on help from other people for daily living tasks and body functions. You can manage your health better.
- It's about being able to enjoy a good quality of life for the majority of your lifespan.
- Makes daily tasks easier to accomplish.
- Increases your quality of life.

Examples of how to support the message:

- Explain how the Home Exercise support Program relates to daily functions - bring in a trained professional to teach the exercises and how they can be completed at home.
- Explain how certain exercises are related to daily functions and tasks. For example an arm extension over the head assists in being able to reach items on a high shelf, doing some weight training allows muscles to stay strong so that carrying groceries or grandchildren is an activity that can be maintained.

To Instructors who may be teaching physical activity programs/classes:**Key message:**

Understand the importance of participant assessment.

Why is the message important?

Every individual has a different level of physical ability. Successful physical activity engages participants at their current level of ability, encourages improvement, and provides permission to take a rest if the intensity or activity is too difficult. A successful instructor knows when to encourage, when to recommend a rest and how to improve the ability of all participants.

An activity that is too easy or too difficult for a participant is not beneficial and may cause injury or intimidate to the point that the participant doesn't continue the activity.

Details of the message:

- Understand the stages of change model.
- Know how to adapt or modify activities to be inclusive.
- Show encouragement, and congratulate for well accomplished activities.

Examples of how to support the message:

- Consider a stage of change questionnaire to determine if participant is ready for action.
- Consider challenges that might occur in your class and determine modifications for them in advance. Eg. Some people might use weights or not, some might be able to lift their legs, others not.
- Imitate some participant challenges that may occur in an activity to gain appreciation and empathy for how difficult an activity could be for some individuals. eg. Vaseline on glasses, or rocks in shoes or perform the task in the Alzheimer virtual tour.
- Get to know your participants by talking about their interests and attitudes towards being active.

Key message:

Understand the importance of safety and risk management.

Why is the message important?

It is the responsibility of the activity leader to ensure the class environment is as safe and risk of injury is as minimal as possible. Simple checks around the activity location, modification of activities and knowledge of teaching the activity are all part of ensuring a safe, well instructed activity.

Details of the message:

- Be sure physical environment is safe.
- Be aware of the emergency procedures and building protocols.
- Be knowledgeable of your participants and their abilities.

Examples of how to support the message:

- Do an audit of your space to ensure safety and accessibility by checking in with the facility manager for a review.
- Check to see if a wheelchair or walker can move freely within your building.
- Know how to adapt an exercise or activity to include all participants.
- Remind participants to work at their own pace and if something hurts stop the activity and inform the instructor.

Key message:

Keep things fun and functional; be creative and provide variety once in a while.

Why is this message important?

Keeping activities fun and creative will make participants want to continue participating.

Continuing to participate in physical activity is important for overall health. Most people attend physical activity/exercise classes not necessarily for the activity/exercise itself but because they enjoy the time in the class, are able to socialize and consider the activity fun.

Details of the message:

- A creative, fun and functional activity that is safe usually ensures the participants will return.

Examples of how to support the message:

- Ask participants for ideas on what they would like to do.
- Involve participants by asking if they would like to take a lead role in showing a new skill such as dancing from a different culture.
- Try a theme class or a different exercise and show what areas of the body is working
- Use music that is recognizable from a specific decade. Eg. The '70's or '80's.
- Go to someone else's class to get some ideas or tips.