Aging and Physical Activity

Three behaviors: poor nutrition, lack of physical activity and tobacco use contribute to the development and severity of chronic disease. Older Vermonters (ages 65 and older) have similar rates to all adult Vermonters when it comes to poor diet or not getting the recommended amount of physical activity. Nearly four out of five older Vermonters do not follow the recommended diet, and two out of five do not get enough physical activity. Learn more at: 3-4-50 Vermont.

In general, all adults need at least 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., brisk walking) every week. This is about 30 minutes per day, five days a week and can be broken into three 10 minute “bouts” or longer periods of activity (i.e. bike ride, walk, swim) over fewer days. In addition, muscle-strengthening activity is recommended on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms). See the CDC Physical Activity Recommendations for Americans for more information.

When it comes to physical activity, many things “count”. It can be done alone, with friends or family members. Gardening, tennis, swimming, dancing or any activity where you get your body moving works!

Vermont is a great place for seniors to be active, especially in the summer. We have recreation paths throughout the state where seniors can safely walk or bike, parks with courts, fields, and swimming and, of course, our mountains that offer a variety of hiking options for people of all abilities.

Vermont also has an active chapter of the National Senior Games Association, the Vermont Senior Games (VSGA). VSGA hosts year-round sports and fitness competitions in over 20 sports, such as basketball, bocce, bowling, cycling, running, swimming, and tennis. VSGA also supports non-competitive physical fitness programs, activities, and education for the age 50+ community through its program Move for Well-being. The mission of VSGA is fun, fellowship and fitness.

Physical activity is good for you regardless of your age and experts agree that for most people, some physical activity is better than none at all. Regular physical activity is one of the most important things older adults can do for their health. If you are already active, keep it up; if you are not, start today – try different activities until you find ones you enjoy, can do regularly, and fit your lifestyle.