Swimming - health benefits
Swimming is one of the most popular sports in Australia. Our nation is surrounded by water and swimming is one of our great passions. As well as being fun, swimming is a great way to keep fit, stay healthy and make friends. Swimming is a healthy activity that you can continue for a lifetime. It is a low-impact activity that has many physical and mental health benefits.

**Swimming for recreation**

Swimming is a great recreational activity for people of all ages. Recreational swimming can provide you with a low-impact workout and it’s also a good way to relax and feel good. Common swimming styles in recreational swimming are breaststroke, backstroke, side stroke and freestyle.

**Competitive swimming**

Some people who enjoy swimming want to take it to a competitive level. This can provide the health benefits of a vigorous workout as well as the fun and thrill of competition. The main strokes used in competitive swimming are breaststroke, freestyle, backstroke and butterfly. The distances swum in competition swimming can vary from 50 metres in a pool to much farther distances in open water.

**Health benefits of swimming**

Swimming is a great workout because you need to move your whole body against the resistance of the water. Swimming is a good all-round activity because it:

- keeps your heart rate up but takes some of the impact stress off your body
- builds endurance, muscle strength and cardiovascular fitness
- helps maintain a healthy weight, healthy heart and lungs
- tones muscles and builds strength
- provides an all-over body workout, as nearly all of your muscles are used during swimming.

**Other benefits of swimming**

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betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Swimming has many other benefits including:

- being a relaxing and peaceful form of exercise
- alleviating stress
- improving coordination, balance and posture
- improving flexibility
- providing good low-impact therapy for some injuries and conditions
- providing a pleasant way to cool down on a hot day
- being available in many places – you can swim in swimming pools, beaches, lakes, dams and rivers. Make sure that the environment you choose to swim in is safe.

Getting started with swimming

Getting started in swimming is easy. It is a sport for all age groups, skill and fitness levels. Before you get started, you will need to purchase a pair of swimmers and some goggles. Goggles can be purchased for around $15 and upwards.

There are public pools throughout Australia that are open to everyone. Entry to public pools usually costs a few dollars and many aquatic centres offer swimming lessons for people of all ages, as well as training and exercise groups.

Some general tips for swimming

Before you dive in:

- Make sure you know how to swim.
- Choose a safe environment.
- Warm up and stretch your muscles and joints before entering the water.
- Have plenty of fluids on hand and drink regularly.
- Don’t overdo it if you’re just starting out.
- See your doctor if you haven’t exercised for a long time.

Where to get help

- Local leisure centres, public pools and swimming clubs
- Swimming Australia Tel. (02) 6219 5600
- Smartplay Tel. (03) 9674 8777

Things to remember

- As well as being fun, swimming is a great way to keep fit and well and make friends.
- Swimming is a healthy activity that you can continue for a lifetime.
- Swimming is a low-impact activity that has many physical and mental health benefits.
- Make sure you know how to swim and do so in a safe environment.

References


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More information

Keeping active

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- Keeping active basics
- Getting started
- Staying fit and motivated
- Exercise safety and injury prevention
- Healthy eating and exercise
- Keeping active throughout life
- Health conditions and exercise

Keeping active basics

- Balancing energy in and energy out
  
  A kilojoule is a unit of measure of energy, in the same way that kilometres measure distance...

- Body mass index (BMI)
  
  Body mass index or BMI is an approximate measure of your total body fat...

- Energy in food (kilojoules and calories)
  
  A kilojoule is a unit of measure of energy, in the same way that kilometres measure distance...

- Exercise intensity
If you can talk but not sing, you’re exercising at the right intensity.

- **Exercise in your local surroundings (video)**
  
  Want to exercise, but find gyms boring or expensive? Sue Stanley and Shane Hillsborough team up to show you how to exercise indoors and outdoors using your local surroundings - whether it's running up...

- **Exercise - the low-down on hydration**
  
  You need to drink enough and regularly to keep hydrated during exercise.

- **Fitness centres – how to choose one**
  
  Do some research before signing up at a fitness centre.

- **How to make exercise fun (slideshow)**
  
  Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don’t know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off...

- **Kids and energy needs**
  
  It’s important for kids to eat a wide variety of foods for a healthy, well-balanced diet and to be physically active. Creating healthy habits during childhood helps to ensure lifelong healthy...

- **Personal trainers – how to choose one**
  
  Make sure your personal trainer is properly qualified before entering into any agreement.

- **Physical activity for men**
  
  Many men are only motivated to become more active after they have a health scare.

- **Physical activity for seniors**
  
  Physical activity can help older people maintain independence, recover from illness and reduce their risk of disease.

- **Physical activity for women**
  
  If you can’t make the time to exercise for yourself, do it for your family.

- **Physical activity - how to get active when you are busy**
  
  Even if you’re busy, you still need to find a way to be physically active.

- **Physical activity - it’s important**
  
  Just 30 minutes of moderate activity each day can improve your health and reduce the risk of developing certain conditions or diseases.

- **Physical activity – setting your goals**
  
  When you're trying to become more physically active, set realistic health and fitness goals.

- **Physical activity - what's your excuse?**
  
  There are many excuses we can come up with to avoid being active, but the truth is there is always a way to fit some physical activity into your day.

- **Resistance training – health benefits**
  
  If you do resistance training repeatedly and consistently, your muscles become stronger.

- **Secrets to healthy ageing (slideshow)**
  
  Experts say the key to living well into our 80s and 90s is making a commitment to live healthily. Check out these simple ideas and embrace your senior years!

- **Sports and physical activity**
  
  Award 62 per cent of Australian adults do not meet the recommended physical activity guidelines to gain the health benefits of increased fitness and reduced body fat.

**Getting started**

- **Exercise programs**
  
  If you are unfamiliar with what is involved, starting an exercise program can be challenging.

- **Exercise - the low-down on hydration**
  
  You need to drink enough and regularly to keep hydrated during exercise.

- **Gardening for children**
  
  Children can learn new skills, have fun and develop self-confidence when they grow their own plants.

- **Gardening for health - starting out**

**Swimming - health benefits**
Gardening is a healthy activity that can be enjoyed by everyone...

- Gardening for older people
  Garden spaces and equipment can be modified or adapted to help older people enjoy gardening...

- Gardening safety
  Gardening is an enjoyable form of exercise, but you need to take care...

- Getting active - ticker talk tips
  The main thing is to choose physical activities that you enjoy and that you can stick to in the long term...

- How to make exercise fun (slide show)
  Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don’t know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off...

- Physical activity - choosing a provider
  Choosing the right fitness centre or service provider requires some research...

- Physical activity – choosing the one for you
  You are more likely to keep up a healthy lifestyle change if your chosen activity suits you...

- Physical activity for men
  Many men are only motivated to become more active after they have a health scare...

- Physical activity for seniors
  Physical activity can help older people maintain independence, recover from illness and reduce their risk of disease...

- Physical activity for women
  If you can’t make the time to exercise for yourself, do it for your family...

- Physical activity - how to get active when you are busy
  Even if you’re busy, you still need to find a way to be physically active...

- Physical activity – how to get started
  If you’ve been inactive and want to begin physical activity, see a doctor first...

- Physical activity – learn how to swim (video)
  Swimming is a great low-impact exercise for all ages and abilities. Australian marathon swimmer, Tammy Van Wisse shows ex-AFL (Australian Football League) player and coach, Tony Shaw some swimming...

- Physical activity - overcoming barriers (video)
  Former world aerobics champion, Sue Stanley shows us how to overcome common exercise excuses...

- Physical activity – overcoming the barriers
  If you think physical activity is boring, try exercising with a friend...

- Physical activity – setting yourself goals
  When you’re trying to become more physically active, set realistic health and fitness goals...

- Physical activity – staying motivated
  Pick an exercise or fitness activity that appeals to you and suits your lifestyle...

**Staying fit and motivated**

- 10 tips to plan your exercise
  Physical activity won’t just happen. Most activities require planning – starting and maintaining a physical activity program does too. Here are some tips for getting ready to exercise: Make...

- 10 tips to stay active year round
  Pick an activity you enjoy... 10 tips to stay active year round...

- Exercise and mood
  Exercise can have an enormous impact on your mood. Not only can exercise help in treating depression, it can also prevent people from becoming depressed again. So it’s important to keep up an exercise...
Exercise - everyday activities
There are lots of everyday activities that provide an opportunity to be active and provide health benefits...

Exercise in your local surroundings (video)
Want to exercise, but find gyms boring or expensive? Sue Stanley and Shane Bilsborough team up to show you how to exercise indoors and outdoors using your local surroundings - whether it's running up...

Exercise programs
If you are unfamiliar with what is involved, starting an exercise program can be challenging...

How to make exercise fun (slide show)
Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don't know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off...

Pets can make you healthy (video)
Australians have one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world...

Physical activity – choosing the one for you
You are more likely to keep up a healthy lifestyle change if your chosen activity suits you...

Physical activity for men
Many men are only motivated to become more active after they have a health scare...

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Physical activity can help older people maintain independence, recover from illness and reduce their risk of disease...

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Physical activity – overcoming barriers (video)
Former world aerobics champion, Sue Stanpley shows us how to overcome common exercise excuses...

Physical activity – overcoming the barrier
If you think physical activity is boring, try exercising with a friend...

Physical activity - staying active during summer (video)
Physical Activity and Fitness Trainer Sherri Bourne gives us some great tips for staying active over the summer months...

Physical activity – staying motivated
Pick an exercise or fitness activity that appeals to you and suits your lifestyle...

Physical activity - what’s your excuse?
There are many excuses we can come up with to avoid being active, but the truth is there is always a way to fit some physical activity into your day...

Stretching exercise in winter (video)
When starting out an exercise program, it's really important to do a warm up and cool down before and after exercise...

The amount of physical activity you need
It’s important for your health that you get enough physical activity every day, and that you limit your sedentary behaviour. But getting the amount of physical activity you need doesn’t have to be...

Exercise safety and injury prevention

10 tips for safe stretching
Make stretching part of your life...

10 tips to exercise safely
Exercising regularly has wide-ranging physical, emotional and social health benefits. You need to exercise safely to remain healthy and injury-free. If it’s safe and painless, you’re more...

Aerobics - preventing injury

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Aerobics injuries are usually caused by trauma and overuse, but can be prevented by using the right techniques and equipment.

- **Australian rules football - preventing injury**
  Australian rules football is a physical contact sport that often results in injuries from tackling, kicking, running and constant competition for the ball.

- **Basketball - health benefits**
  Basketball is a sport enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.

- **Basketball - preventing injury**
  Basketball is a fast game with frequent and aggressive body contacts - injuries can and do occur.

- **Canoeing and kayaking - health benefits**
  Canoeing and kayaking can be done as a hobby, a competitive sport or as a fun activity on holidays.

- **Canoeing and kayaking - preventing injury**
  Careful preparation and the right equipment can help prevent canoeing and kayaking injuries.

- **Cricket - health benefits**
  To play cricket you need to be fit and strong and have good hand-eye coordination and ball-handling skills.

- **Cricket - preventing injury**
  Cricket is a very popular sport. Injuries are often caused by overuse, being struck by a cricket ball and falls.

- **Cycling - health benefits**
  Cycling can help to protect you from serious diseases.

- **Cycling - preventing injury**
  You are much more likely to hurt yourself by falling off your bike or hitting a stationary object than colliding with another vehicle.

- **Dance - health benefits**
  Dancing can be a fun way to stay fit for people of all ages and abilities.

- **Dance - preventing injury**
  Dancing is fun and a great form of exercise, but make sure you avoid injuries.

- **Dog walking - the health benefits**
  If you are planning to buy a dog, make sure you choose a breed that is appropriate to your lifestyle.

- **Exercise safety**
  Training too hard or fast is a common cause of sports-related injuries.

- **Fishing - preventing injury**
  Never go fishing alone - always fish with someone else and, ideally, with two other people.

- **Golf - health benefits**
  Golf provides a stimulating challenge, combined with a healthy walk in pleasant surroundings.

- **Golf - preventing injury**
  The average golfer playing an 18-hole game walks about seven kilometres.

- **Heat stress and exercise**
  Heat stress occurs when sweat can't evaporate fast enough to keep the body sufficiently cool during physical activity.

**Healthy eating and exercise**

- **Food for sport - tucker talk tips**
  Carbohydrate is the most important nutrient for athletes.

- **Secrets to healthy ageing (slide show)**
  Experts say the key to living well into our 90s and 90s is making a commitment to live healthily. Check out these simple ideas and embrace your senior years.

- **Sporting performance and food**
  Good nutrition and a healthy diet are essential to improving your sports performance.

- **The amount of physical activity you need**
It’s important for your health that you get enough physical activity every day, and that you limit your sedentary behaviour. But getting the amount of physical activity you need doesn’t have to be...

Keeping active throughout life

- 10 tips for active seniors
  - Stay independent for longer with regular exercise... 10 tips for active seniors...

- Children – keeping them active
  - A young child is naturally active, so build upon their inclinations to use their body...

- Exercise and stretching in the office (video)
  - Sitting behind a desk all day doesn't mean you can’t exercise...

- Gardens for all – a health activity
  - Gardening has many health and therapeutic benefits, and is an activity that most people can enjoy...

- Getting active - tucker talk tips
  - The main thing is to choose physical activities that you enjoy and that you can stick to in the long term...

- Healthy active Koori kids - tucker talk tips
  - Good nutrition and physical exercise help to keep Koori kids healthy and avoid diseases when they get older...

- Healthy ageing – stay involved
  - Reach out to the world around you for fun, a sense of achievement, social contact and mental stimulation...

- Healthy and active ageing
  - Being physically active, eating well, socialising and improving your health can help you live a healthy, happy and active life as you get older...

- How to make exercise fun (slideshow)
  - Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don’t know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off...

- How to volunteer and boost your health (slideshow)
  - Volunteering is great for our health – it makes us feel good, while helping others in the process...

- Older people in hospital – Get well soon
  - Learn about improving and maintaining your health during a hospital stay...

- Parent's guide for active girls
  - Physical activity is an important part of health and wellbeing, and girls should remain active as they grow up...

- Physical activity for men
  - Many men are only motivated to become more active after they have a health scare...

- Physical activity for seniors
  - Physical activity can help older people maintain independence, recover from illness and reduce their risk of disease...

- Physical activity for seniors – staying active during summer (video)
  - Physical Activity and Fitness Trainer - Sherri Bourne shares a few easy and low-impact ways for seniors to stay healthy over the summer months...

- Physical activity for women
  - If you can't make the time to exercise for yourself, do it for your family...

- Physical activity - what's your excuse?
  - There are many excuses we can come up with to avoid being active, but the truth is there is always a way to fit some physical activity into your day...

- Postnatal exercise
  - Always consult with your doctor or midwife before starting any postnatal exercise program...

- Pregnancy and exercise
  - Unless you have complications, you should be able to exercise throughout your pregnancy...

- Secrets to healthy ageing (slideshow)
  - Experts say the key to living well into our 80s and 90s is making a commitment to live healthily. Check out these simple ideas and embrace your senior years!

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Sport and children

Make sure that some family outings offer opportunities for physical activity, such as playing sport together.

The amount of physical activity you need

It’s important for your health that you get enough physical activity every day, and that you limit your sedentary behaviour. But getting the amount of physical activity you need doesn’t have to be...

Vision loss and sport

Many sports can be adapted to suit people who are blind or have low vision.

Walking for good health

Walking will improve your fitness and reduce your risk of heart disease.

Walking - the benefits for older people

Walking is great exercise for older people. It has a range of health and social benefits, and most people can do it.

Health conditions and exercise

Arthritis and exercise

Exercise can reduce some of the symptoms of arthritis, and improve joint mobility and strength.

Asthma and exercise

Exercise-induced asthma can be prevented with medication and by preparing for exercise and physical activity.

Breathing problems and exercise

A little physical activity and some breathing exercises can help people with lung disease.

Cancer - exercise to help you cope

People with cancer should be as physically active as their abilities and condition allow.

Dementia - reducing your risk

Adopting a 'brain healthy' lifestyle may reduce your risk of dementia in later life.

Diabetes - issues for children and teenagers

Many parents worry when their child with diabetes starts or returns to school.

Epilepsy and employment

Many people living with epilepsy are successfully employed across a range of professional fields.

Epilepsy and exercise

It is rare for a person with epilepsy to have a seizure during physical activity, but you should always take safety precautions when exercising.

Exercise and mood

Exercise can have an enormous impact on your mood. Not only can exercise help in treating depression, it can also prevent people from becoming depressed again. So it’s important to keep up an exercise...

Exercise in your local surroundings (video)

Want to exercise, but find gyms boring or expensive? Sue Stanley and Shane Bilsborough team up to show you how to exercise indoors and outdoors using your local surroundings - whether it's running up...

HIV, hepatitis and sport

People with HIV or hepatitis B or C participate in a wide range of sports without restrictions, and the risk of transmission to another player is extremely small.

Menstruation - athletic amenorrhoea

Women who are athletes or who exercise a lot on a regular basis are at risk of developing athletic amenorrhoea, which is the absence of periods.

Osteoporosis and exercise

Exercise can reduce the risk of fractures resulting from osteoporosis by both slowing the rate of bone loss, and reducing the person's risk of falling by building muscle strength and improving balance.

Sports injuries

A sports injury may be more severe than you think.

Type 2 diabetes - healthy eating and exercise (video)
People with type 2 diabetes talk about positive lifestyle changes that improve their quality of life...

Related Information

- Older people in hospital - Get well soon
  Learn about improving and maintaining your health during a hospital stay...

- Canoeing and kayaking - health benefits
  Canoeing and kayaking can be done as a hobby, a competitive sport or as a fun activity on holidays...

- Water polo - preventing injury
  Water polo is a demanding game as players have to tread water or swim for the whole match...

- Windsurfing - preventing injury
  You need balance and stamina for windsurfing...

- Cycling - health benefits
  Cycling can help to protect you from serious diseases...

Home

Related information on other websites

- Swim Australia
- Swimming Australia
- Swimming Victoria

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