



**Act Now,
Age Better.**



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.

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?

“
Because if we act now, we can age better.”

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.



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**.
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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.
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Dancing



- Improves **coordination, balance** and **posture**.
 - Movement to music lifts mood and **reduces stress**.
 - Rehearsing sequences **stimulates memory** and concentration.
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Football



- Increases muscle and **bone strength**.
 - Lowers blood pressure and **reduces body fat**.
 - A great way to improve your overall fitness and **endurance**.
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Group exercise classes



- Builds **muscle strength** and helps you **move faster**.
 - Exercising with others can help **reduce anxiety** and keep you **socially connected**.
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Mountaineering



- Improves **balance, mobility** and **stamina**, which can help reduce your risk of falling.
 - **Lowers blood pressure.**
 - Can help improve your **mental health.**
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Nordic walking



- Engages 90% of your muscles.
 - Improves your **overall fitness, builds stamina** and can help maintain healthy **cholesterol levels.**
 - Can help **improve anxiety.**
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Rounders



- Great for **coordination, agility, flexibility** and **strength.**
 - Playing strategically as part of a team can help keep your **brain sharp.**
 - **Sociable and fun.**
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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 – from touch rugby to full contact games.
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Running



- Strengthens your **heart and lungs.**
 - Improves **bone health.**
 - Reduces the risk of heart disease and strokes.
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Swimming



- Keeps your **heart healthy**.
 - Builds full body **strength** and **flexibility**, which help reduce your risk of falling.
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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**.
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Tennis



- Improves **coordination**.
 - Builds **muscle strength** and **cardiovascular fitness**.
 - A great way to stay **connected socially**.
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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

Top tips

for getting started



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!



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.



Join a local group.

Community classes, local clubs and Act Now, Age Better sporting partners offer beginner sessions led by trained instructors.



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.



Start small and be consistent. 10-minute sessions still count and help you build momentum.