



Healthy Ageing Online Learning guide

Guide for delivery within community groups

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Who is this guide for?

This guide is for community organisations and their leaders to support them with embedding Healthy Ageing Online Learning, including regular physical activity, into their older adult community settings.

What is Healthy Ageing Online Learning?

The [Healthy Ageing Online Learning](#) is free self-directed education that aims to build knowledge, skills and confidence in older adults to help them lead active and healthy lives. It includes:

- eight online learning modules with quizzes
- two online exercise circuits for beginners
- digital fact sheets with helpful tips and information
- a digital exercise manual and logbook

The learning modules and exercise circuits are listed below.

Module	Description
Healthy plate and serving sizes	Learn about the five food groups and the recommended serving sizes for your age group.
Sugar, salt and fat and label reading	Learn about unsaturated and saturated fats, natural and added sugar, and how to read Nutrition Information Panels.
Calcium and vitamin D	Learn about the relationship between your bones, calcium and vitamin D and how to get enough calcium and vitamin D.
Fibre and incontinence	Learn about why we need to have enough fibre in our diet and the signs of a healthy bladder and bowel.
Recipes and food swaps	Learn tips for cooking at home and more about eating foods that will give your body the nutrients it needs for energy and wellbeing.
Food safety and shop smart, shop healthy	Learn how to store food safely and shopping tips to make healthy food choices, even on a budget.
Oral health and vision	Learn tips to keep your gums, teeth, and eyes healthy, and how to identify signs of changing eyesight as you age.
Falls prevention	Learn the common causes of falls and tips to reduce your risk of falling.
Exercise Circuits 1 and 2	Two circuits that guide you through balance and strength exercises to help you keep moving and stay independent. The circuits include warm up activities, 12 exercises and cool down stretches.

A community approach to Healthy Ageing Online Learning

Social activities can help older adults lead a healthier life and improve their mental health and wellbeing.

There are many reasons why adults choose to enjoy physical activity in a group. It can provide positive social connections while also helping prevent the risk of falls and improve mobility.

This guide aims to support older adults to achieve small changes to improve their healthy eating and movement habits.

Ways to promote physical activity¹

Evidence shows that older adults who are physically active:

- can live independently in their own homes for longer
- are less likely to suffer from dementia and other cognitive diseases
- are less likely to fall
- can manage and reduce their risk of health issues including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, bone and joint problems, and some cancers

Regular activity helps to:

- improve sleep, concentration, and energy levels
- improve mental health and wellbeing
- reduce stress and anxiety
- maintain a healthy weight

Physical activity is key to preventing falls

Regular activity and programs that help to improve your strength and balance, can help reduce the risks of falls in older adults who live on their own.²

¹ Australian Government. For older Australians (65 years and over). Department of Health and Aged Care. May 6, 2021. <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/physical-activity-and-exercise/physical-activity-and-exercise-guidelines-for-all-australians/for-older-australians-65-years-and-over>

² Sherrington C, Michaleff ZA, Fairhall N, et al. Exercise to prevent falls in older adults: an updated systematic review and meta-analysis. *BR J Sports Med* 2017; 51:1750-8

Healthy eating as we age

Eating a variety of healthy food is important to help older adults meet their energy needs, maintain good health, and have strong bones and muscles. It also helps older adults to manage any existing health problems and with their physical activity.

How to use this guide

This section provides you with a guide on how to use Healthy Ageing Online Learning in your community.

Below are tips to keep in mind when supporting self-paced learning or group physical activity with older adults in your community:

- Be encouraging, positive and provide clear instructions.
- Take your time and refer to the fact sheets and explain how these can be accessed when going through the program.
- When answering questions, use the [referral guide](#) to help.
- Include a coffee/tea break, as it may be an opportunity for participants and facilitators to get to know each other.

How you set up the physical environment will depend on the number of participants or the type of equipment and facilities you have available.

Examples of suggested set-ups:

Set-up	
Embed exercise circuits into existing community gatherings	<p>Online exercise circuits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporate exercise circuits into existing regular group meetings or events as ‘movement breaks’.• Option to use the online video or exercise manual as a guide to lead exercises.• The circuits are designed so they can be incorporated into any group setting. Refer to Group exercise layout, to help the group decide on a physical set up.
Promote or embed Online Learning modules in existing community settings	<p>One or more approaches below may be used to support the online learning modules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suggest group members access the modules via the Active and Healthy website on their own device to work through the module at their own pace.• If facilities are available, offer a space within the community to work through the online modules as a group (e.g., a community centre).• Incorporate ‘bite size’ group sessions of modules into existing regular group meetings or events, with the aim of covering all modules over a certain period of time.

Broadcast modules on a large screen	<p>Online learning modules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access the modules via the Active and Healthy website. • Share modules on a large screen to be viewed as a group. • Decisions about module content can be made as a group, for example: completing one or two modules per week. • The referral guide will help you answer any questions. <p>Online exercise circuits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants complete exercise circuits together. Refer to Group exercise layout. <p>Option to use the online video or exercise manual as a guide to lead exercises.</p>
Self-directed learning with individual devices	<p>Online learning modules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each individual accesses the modules via the Active and Healthy website on their own device to work through the module at their own pace. • For those without access to a personal device, the module could be made available on computers at a local library or community centre. • Decisions about how the sessions will run can be made as a group, for example: participants may want to work independently or as a group to allow for discussion. • The referral guide will help you answer any questions. <p>Online exercise circuits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants complete exercise circuits together. Refer to the Group exercise layout. <p>Option to use the online video or exercise manual as a guide to lead exercises.</p>

Note: The Healthy Ageing Online Learning modules are freely accessible via the [Active and Healthy website](#). Participants can access this program on their own devices at any time.

What to consider when leading a session

This section aims to give you the tools necessary to help create a safe environment for group exercise with older adults.

Safety considerations before and during an exercise program

Anyone at any age can start exercising to increase their physical activity. If a participant develops adverse symptoms while exercising, they should stop and seek medical advice from their doctor or appropriate health care provider before continuing.

You may want to use a pre-screening exercise tool with participants prior to conducting the exercise circuits. You can find an example of a pre-screening exercise tool at [Exercise and Sport Science Australia](#).

Adverse symptoms experienced while exercising can include:

- dizziness, light headedness or feeling faint
- chest pain

- irregular, rapid, or a fluttery heartbeat
- difficulty breathing
- nausea
- severe leg ache or pain

The health of an older adult can change quickly. Participants should not exercise if they do not feel well.

Monitor participants closely

It is important to structure exercise circuits to maximise safety and reduce the risk of injury, especially falling. Here are some important points to keep in mind:

- Frail adults should be positioned close to someone who can act as a support person and provide assistance if needed.
- Chairs, handrails and other furniture may be used to provide balance assistance.
- Exercises should be performed on a stable surface.
- Participants should wear supportive shoes to perform exercises.

Group exercise layout

The following suggestions can help you support a safe and effective group exercise sessions for participants who choose to work together:

- Organise the group in a semi-circle format and complete the exercises together.
- Complete a warm-up before starting the exercises.
- Follow the exercises with a warm down.
- Allow the group to complete as many repetitions as they comfortably can.
- Let participants pick the level of exercise they feel comfortable with (there are two regressions and two progressions for each exercise).

Space

A crowded space is a major safety concern. Overcrowded venues make it difficult to move and can lead to accidents between participants such as falls. Choose a venue that provides enough space for participants to freely exercise without knocking into one another.

Equipment

It is important to check all equipment used in the class for safety. The exercise circuits require a chair and/or wall. Chairs must be sturdy with no wheels.

Referral Guide

Active and Healthy website

The [Active and Healthy website](#) provides information and tools that can assist older adults to adopt a healthier lifestyle. Participants can access resources on [active living](#) and [falls prevention](#), the [Staying Active and on Your Feet booklet](#) and [Heathy Ageing Online Learning](#) .

Exercise directory

Participants can use the [exercise directory](#) on the [Active and Healthy website](#) to find local exercise programs for adults aged 50 years and over. These programs support older adults to be active and healthy. The directory allows you to search via location and class type and provides class schedules, prices and contact details.

Get Healthy Service

The Get Healthy Service offers free coaching and online support to help older adults make lifestyle changes and reach their health goals.

The program can support people to:

- eat healthy
- be physically active
- drink less alcohol
- reach and stay at a healthy weight

For more information on the Get Healthy Service or to register for the program, call 1300 806 258 or visit www.gethealthynsw.com.au.

GP or medical professional

Participants with specific medical queries regarding their health and suitability to exercise should be referred directly to their GP or medical professional.