



For immediate release

Physical activity in decline among Australia's over 50s

- Nearly half of Over 50s are less active than five years ago

Three quarters (77%) of Australia's over 50s say they are committed to living a healthy and active lifestyle, yet almost half have decreased their level of physical activity in the past five years, according to new research by Apia, the leading national insurer for over 50s.

Worryingly, Apia's research found that almost a quarter (22%) of those who had decreased their level of activity admitted to being very inactive.

David Skapinker, Apia spokesperson, commented: "Growing older shouldn't mean growing inactive. People tend to think that as they age they no longer need to exercise as often as they did in their younger years, they may injure themselves while exercising if they are frail or weak, and only vigorous activities have any real health benefit, however this is simply not the case."

Dr Ross Walker, one of Australia's best-known and most respected health experts, said: "You're never too old to exercise and most physical activity can be modified to accommodate injuries or weakness so there's always a way to stay active, no matter what your age."

"To maintain a healthy and active lifestyle in your 50s and beyond, the key is to focus on changing the nature of what you do as you get older, instead of just reducing the amount of what you currently do".

Dr Walker suggested opting for lower impact forms of exercise: "These can be easier on the body while still providing all the benefits of more vigorous physical activity. For example; people who love to run or play tennis should try mixing up their exercise routine with different types of activities such as walking, cycling or swimming, to take the stress off their hip bones and joints.

"Mindfulness exercises such as yoga, tai chi or qigong are undeniably important as well as they cultivate health, reduce stress and can be done at any age or fitness level."

Dr Walker warned that over 50s who don't maintain a regular exercise program risk missing out on the important health benefits.

"Keeping yourself physically active is one of the best ways to increase your chances of aging well, as it helps to maintain and increase joint and muscle movement, strengthen bones and prevent falls and injury. Regular exercise is also vital in preventing many age related diseases including: type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and depression. And best of all



it makes you feel good, through the release of endorphins, and is a great way to relax and unwind.”

“A regular exercise program ought to include a combination of cardio or aerobic training, but also regular strength and resistance training,” he advised.

Dr Walker urged older Australians to undertake at least 30 minutes of exercise daily, which raises the heart rate, and provided the following simple tips to help stay fit and healthy:

- Incorporate small incremental exercise into your daily routine to increase activity levels. For example; where possible take the stairs instead of the elevator, try walking instead of driving to the local shops and do stretches or sit on an exercise bike while watching TV.
- Mix up the type of activities you do to ensure you don't get bored, and remember to combine resistance and strength training with low impact activities such as swimming, cycling and yoga.
- Find a hobby which involves physical activity. We're much more inclined to do the things we find enjoyment in.
- Stay active and socialise at the same time by joining a gym, fitness group or cycling and walking meet-ups in your local area.
- If you haven't done much exercise for a while, it's important to gradually build up activity levels to prevent injury and allow yourself time to regain strength and flexibility.
- And remember to have a thorough check-up with your doctor before commencing any intensive exercise program.

- Ends -

Notes to editors:

This release provides general health advice. For any specific health concerns please contact your doctor.

About the research

Apia's research is based on an independent internet survey conducted by Newspoll of 2,082 Australians aged 50 years and over in 2014. Data was collected in line with ISO 20252 – Market, Social and Opinion Research and has been weighted with current ABS population demographics to ensure any extrapolation of results is representative of age and gender on a regional, state and national basis.

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Apia is a specialist insurance provider for people aged over 50. Providing a wide range of home and contents, car, caravan, motor home, boat and life insurance solutions tailored to the over 50s life stage. Apia has a network of branches across Australia serving almost 750,000 policy holders and recently launched Private Health Insurance, underwritten by nib, offering a range of Hospital and Extras covers specifically tailored to meet the varying and individual needs of Australians aged over 50. For more information on Apia visit www.apia.com.au