

Best activities for a healthy mind and body

No matter your age, exercise is vital to your well-being. It keeps you strong, flexible and stable and is an important element of independence and longevity.

“Physical activity creates new pathways in the brain and strengthens old pathways” says Delmanor LivingWell™ coach Karen Hatch. If fitness is new in your life, start slow, says Hatch. “Look for exercise classes that are geared to beginners and work your way up. Ultimately, your goal is to exercise for 150 minutes per week, but that can be broken down into segments of whatever length you like.”



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The key to success is to add variety to your workouts. Some exercise strategies well-suited to older adults:

Walking with Nordic walking poles As we age, we may shorten our gait and stop swinging our arms. Poles keep the arms engaged and get more body parts moving.

Join a class “Fitness classes for seniors are designed for general fitness but also to challenge our balance, reaction times and coordination,” says Hatch, “and are also great for social engagement.”

Buddy up! One way to have fun while you get fit is to have an exercise buddy. Go for regular walks with a friend, outside when the weather’s nice or inside at a mall or track when it’s cold or rainy. Needless to say, it’s vital to adhere to all social distancing guidelines.

Get in the water “It’s easier to exercise in water as joints become buoyant,” explains Hatch. “It also provides resistance for strength.” If you aren’t a great swimmer, walk in shallow water, use a pool noodle for support or join an aquafit class.

Wii bowling This video game exercise platform has lots of subtle benefits. The action of throwing the bowling ball encourages balance training, weight shifting and hand-eye coordination. And it’s a great social activity to keep us moving and engaging with others.

Yoga and tai chi These activities bring in the mind-body connection as well as providing balance, strength and flexibility benefits. Classes designed for seniors are always advisable so that considerations are made for conditions such as lowered bone density and arthritic joints.

Dance! A great form of exercise that encourages movement and helps balance, dancing is also an excellent social activity.

Shuffleboard Great for social interaction and teamwork, it also helps maintain better posture and balance, as it is done in an upright position, so it reduces the risk of problems like compression fractures of the spine by encouraging good alignment.

Staying Connected

“Friendship is the only cement that will ever hold the world together” said US President Woodrow Wilson during the First World War. Today, as during that dark time in history, we have seen that having other people to share our joys and troubles with is an essential part of getting through life in a positive frame of mind.

Now that COVID-19 restrictions have eased, you might be eager to see your friends and family in person — practising social distancing and following all recommended safety guidelines of course. During your time isolated at home however, you might have decided, like many people, that you need more to occupy your time and keep your brain engaged - and more people with whom to engage. Here are a few ideas for both virtual and in-person options:

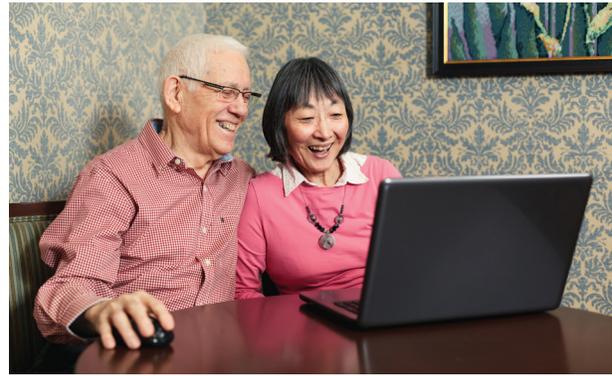
Take advantage of where people of your interests gather. A morning mall walk, for example, can be both good for the body and good for the psyche. You can meet others, all at a safe distance, and get your body limbered up for the day.

The **Older Adult Centres Association** of Ontario website is oacao.org. There, you will find a list of all seniors’ centres across the province. As restrictions ease, the centres are beginning to offer programming that may appeal to you — and provide some new relationships.

If you still feel safer staying in, you can take advantage of the world at your fingertips through a computer or tablet. Schedule regular virtual tours with friends and family. Play online games. Or join an online discussion group or book club. **Celadon Books** offers a webpage with links to five different online book clubs so you can choose what suits you best:

celadonbooks.com/online-book-club

Don’t have a computer or tablet? Consider reaching out in the old-fashioned way. Pick up a large box of greeting cards



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and notepaper and send regular correspondence to friends and family. Everyone loves to get a piece of personal mail. Be sure to let them know that you would love to hear back from them. The nonprofit **Letters Against Depression** (lettersagainst.org) gives people an opportunity to write hand-written letters of support to people suffering from depression. This is a simple way to do and feel good, and to connect with others.

If you found living alone difficult in the past few months, you might also like to consider a move to a location amongst other people. At Delmanor, we have heard the comment “Why didn’t I do this sooner?” from hundreds of residents who found they vastly preferred the friendships and experiences in their new residence over life on their own.

Finding ways to stay connected with others is always important, but particularly so during times when we are isolated at home. It is wise to think ahead as to how to avoid this in future, and to make the most of opportunities to stay connected with loved ones and others.

Explore living options, and all the Delmanor LivingWell™ program has to offer, by calling or visiting us online at Delmanor.com.

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