



## Social Isolation and Loneliness: How Physical Activity Keeps Older Adults Connected, Engaged, and Energized!

By Vallyn Sielski, Recreation Therapist

Did you know that **1 in 4 adults over the age of 50** report being socially isolated; meaning they have few regular social contacts or opportunities for interaction?

Loneliness, while related, is different: it is the *feeling* we get when our social connections do not meet our expectations, in either quantity or quality. This means someone can have regular contact with others yet still feel lonely, while another person may thrive with fewer connections.

As we age, life transitions such as retirement, divorce or widowhood, relocation, or changes in health (hearing, vision, and mobility) can increase the risk of both social isolation and loneliness. These challenges are not just emotional, they link to higher risks of hospitalization, heart disease, weakened immunity, depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline.

**The good news? Physical activity, especially when done with others, is a powerful antidote.**

When older adults participate in group exercise, they are doing more than strengthening muscles and improving balance. They are building connections, finding purpose and sharing a sense of commitment with others. A 2023 Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health survey found **62% of Canadian older adults** reported using exercise or exercise classes to reduce feelings of isolation or loneliness.

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## Social Isolation and Loneliness: How Physical Activity Keeps Older Adults Connected, Engaged, and Energized Continued



Physical activity helps in several ways:

- **Boosts mood** by releasing “happy hormones” (endorphins) that help counteract emotional distress.
- **Supports independence** by improving strength, balance, and day-to-day physical function.
- **Encourages connection** through shared experiences, conversation, and belonging.

As **Forever...in motion** instructors and participants, you are in a unique position to help create and sustain this positive feedback loop:

More physical activity → improved physical and mental health → more social connections → an even greater desire to keep moving and engaging.

By fostering a safe, welcoming, and social environment in your classes, you are not just improving fitness; you are supporting each other to live longer, healthier, and more connected lives.

### Testimonial - FIM Participants

We have been members of Humboldt FIM for about 8 to 10 years. We are so happy with the organization and in particular with our local instructors. They make the class fun and also keep up to date with new exercises. This sustains the interest of our participants. The physical and mental health benefits of this program are obvious to us and keep us coming. We can't say enough about how much we appreciate the volunteer efforts of our instructors and their dedication to us and to the program - **Bob and Susan Bellamy (Humboldt)**



**Forever...in motion** “Halloween Howl”  
The Gathering Place - Humboldt



## Taking Care of Our Feet

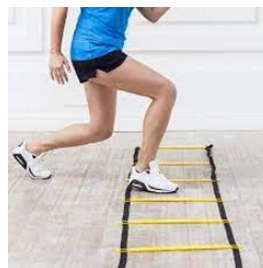
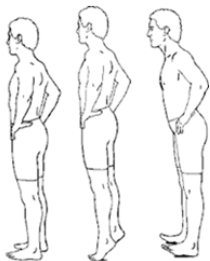
By Crystal Wright, Health Educator

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We often overlook the dexterity, strength and coordination of the toes and ankles; however, this is the foundation for all our movement so taking care of our feet is important! Foot exercises can help older adults maintain balance, reduce fall risk, enhance circulation, and improve overall mobility. Let's take off our socks and shoes and give feet exercises a try:

- **Toe Spreads:** Spread toes apart and relax.
- **Ankle Circles:** Rotate ankles clockwise and counterclockwise.
- **Towel Scrunch:** Use toes to scrunch a towel on the floor, repeat with each foot.
- **Toe Grips:** Pick up small objects like marbles with toes.
- **Heel and Toe Lifts:** Sit or stand with feet flat, then lift toes while keeping heel down. Reverse by lifting heels, while keeping toes down. Repeat.
- **One-Leg Stand:** Hold balance on one leg, repeat on the other.
- **Foot-Eye Coordination:** Practice kicking a ball or stepping on marked corners.

Remember to start slowly and monitor how you feel. You may also want to start the exercises in seated, and progress to standing (as able). Gradually increase the number of reps as strength and balance improve. Finally, consider speaking to an occupational or physical therapist if you have specific concerns about your foot dexterity, strength and coordination.





## New Forever...in motion Leaders!



**Bruno, Humboldt, & Virtual  
Leader Training**



**Primrose Chateau  
Leader Training**



**Sierras of Erindale  
Leader Training**



**Forever...in motion Leader Practical Day  
September, 2025**

*Wishing you and your family a joyous, safe and active holiday season!*

*Merry Christmas and all the best in the New Year!*

*From the Saskatchewan Health Authority*

*Forever...in motion team*





## Concussions in Older Adults

By: Sherri Wagenhoffer & Garrett Saxton  
Physical Therapists



The online website “Brain Injury Canada” updated their guidelines regarding concussions in adults aged 65 and older. A concussion is a brain injury that affects how you think, feel, and function. It can occur after a hit to the head, face, or neck, or from a sudden movement causing the brain to shift inside the skull. In older adults, most concussions result from a fall.

**After a Possible Concussion:** Report **any** fall or head impact to a healthcare professional right away. Adults 65+ are at higher risk of brain bleeding, especially if taking blood thinners. A CT scan may need to be done to check.

**When to Seek Emergency Care:** These symptoms require immediate medical attention: severe or worsening headaches, repeated vomiting, difficulty waking up, seizures, neck pain, weakness or tingling in the arms or legs, double vision, confusion, or loss of consciousness.

**Common Symptoms:** You do not need to lose consciousness to have a concussion. Symptoms vary. Common ones include: memory problems, trouble concentrating, headaches, dizziness, blurry vision, balance problems, nausea or vomiting, ringing in the ears and sensitivity to light or noise.

**Recovery and Returning to Activities:** Rest for the first 24 - 48 hours, then gradually return to light activities such as walking, and light household tasks. Symptoms may last for weeks or months. Increase activity slowly and stop if symptoms worsen.

**Preventing Falls Includes:** Balance and strength exercises, review of medications, use of mobility aids, and obtaining home safety equipment e.g. grab bars, can all reduce fall risk.

Learn more at [www.parachute.ca/concussion65](http://www.parachute.ca/concussion65)





## Resources and Events to be Aware of ...



### Forever...in motion Leader Training

#### Saskatoon & Area:

- **Saskatoon** - January 28, February 4, 6, 11, 13, 2026 - Circle Drive Alliance Church
- **Saskatoon** - Condensed Training - February 26 & 27, 2026 - Forest Grove Community Church
- **Rural** - March 5, 10, 12, 17, 19, 2026 - Warman Home Centre Communiplex, Warman, SK.

Please contact Brenda at (306) 655-2454 or [brenda.chomyn@saskhealthauthority.ca](mailto:brenda.chomyn@saskhealthauthority.ca) to register or for more information.

#### Regina & Area:

- To be determined

Please contact Marisol Molina-Smith at (306) 766-7163 or [Marisol.molinasmith@saskhealthauthority.ca](mailto:Marisol.molinasmith@saskhealthauthority.ca) for more information.

#### SPRA Training:

- To be determined

Please contact Kelsey at (306) 780-9219 or [kmichaluk@spra.sk.ca](mailto:kmichaluk@spra.sk.ca) for more information.



Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), in partnership with Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association, provides **Forever...in motion** as a health promotion strategy that strives to improve the health of Older Adults living in community.

For more information about **Forever...in motion** in your region contact:

#### Saskatoon & area:

- Kimberly Willison (306) 844-4081 or [Kimberly.willison@saskhealthauthority.ca](mailto:Kimberly.willison@saskhealthauthority.ca)

#### Regina & area:

- Marisol Molina-Smith (306) 766-7163  
[Marisol.molinasmith@saskhealthauthority.ca](mailto:Marisol.molinasmith@saskhealthauthority.ca)

#### Regions outside Saskatoon and Regina:

- Kelsey Michaluk (306) 780-9219 or [kmichaluk@spra.sk.ca](mailto:kmichaluk@spra.sk.ca)



**Saskatchewan  
Health Authority**



**Saskatchewan  
Parks and Recreation  
Association**