

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

February 22, 2013

Physical Activity for Seniors – Forever...*in motion*

Almost everyone knows that exercise is good for us. It helps keep muscles strong and joints healthy. It has a protective affect against a number of chronic conditions including heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, some cancers and some dementias. Regular physical activity also boosts energy and decreases stress but, in spite of overwhelming evidence that regular exercise contributes to a healthy lifestyle, many Canadians do not get enough physical activity to reap the health benefits.

In the senior population, we see the most dramatic decline in physical activity levels. According to Statistics Canada, in 2011 more than 60% of Saskatchewan seniors were classified as inactive in their leisure time. Older Individuals may be concerned that physical activity will cause more harm than good. Will it be too strenuous? Will I hurt myself?

According to Health Canada, as much as half the functional decline between the ages of 30 and 70 is due, not to aging itself, but to an inactive way of life. Simply put, those creaking joints and weak muscles are not always caused by old age but by too much sitting on the couch. That caution that we feel around exercising might be doing more harm than good!

The National Institute of Health (NIH) in the United States points out that an inactive lifestyle can cause older adults to lose ground in four areas that are key to staying healthy and independent. Those four areas include: strength, balance, flexibility and endurance. The NIH goes on to say that exercise is safe for people of all age groups and that older adults hurt their health far more by not exercising than by exercising.

Of course, safety isn't the only concern. For someone who has spent their earlier years doing hard physical work, exercise for the sake of exercise may seem like a waste of time. Others may worry about the cost or whether they can commit the time to regular exercise. Even those who are committed to becoming more active may find that there is nothing in their community that is appropriate for their needs.

The Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation (SPRA) has recently introduced a physical activity initiative that addresses many of these concerns. Originating in the Saskatoon Health Region in 2002, **Forever...*in motion*** is a peer-led exercise program for seniors. Interested individuals take a 20 hour training program offered by a qualified **Forever...*in motion*** Trainer. Upon completion of the training, they have the necessary skills and resources to lead a safe and effective exercise program for seniors in their community.

The exercises are safe for older adults with chronic conditions like arthritis, high blood pressure and osteoporosis, and because the Leader is a volunteer, the cost to the senior participants is minimal. A host organization in the community provides support in terms of exercise space and equipment. Classes may be offered in church basements, community halls or local seniors' centres.

A grant is available to Active Members of SPRA to assist with the cost of training leaders or purchasing small equipment. SPRA encourages community partnerships to build a community strategy around seniors physical activity.

For more information on **Forever...in motion**, contact Pat Lee, SPRA **Forever...in motion** Consultant, at (306) 332-5837 or by e-mail at patlee@spra.sk.ca.

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SPRA is a non-profit member organization dedicated to enhancing quality of life in the Province. SPRA is the leader for a parks and recreation network that builds healthy active communities in Saskatchewan. SPRA is funded by the Saskatchewan Lotteries.

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