

# Keeping *active* around your home

Information for aged care  
support workers to encourage  
their clients to keep active  
around the home and garden.



**SMR Alliance**

Working together to maximise the wellbeing  
of older people and people with a disability

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RED HAT FILMS

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We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Willum people as traditional custodians of the land on which we created this resource. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

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# About this guide

An important part of your role is to support the older people you work with to be as active and independent as possible so they can continue to live in their own homes. Your support can have a big impact on the lives of your clients.

This guide is part of a toolkit that will help you support your clients to be more active around their home and garden.

## HOUSEHOLD TASKS COUNT AS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity can be an exercise class, walking to the shops, playing with children and doing household tasks.

Physical activity is good for our heart, lungs, brain, blood vessels, muscles, joints and bones.

And what's good now is even more important as we get older.

The more we move during the day, the better off we are.

Household tasks are a great way for older people to get the movement they need because they can do these tasks throughout the day, every day, rain or shine.

Household tasks can be adjusted to suit your client's current level of ability and give them the opportunity to do a range of movements. Moving in different ways throughout the day is important for us all.

And something else that's important – if your client enjoys the movement they're doing they'll get more of the benefits.

If you support the older people you work with to do tasks they enjoy around their home, garden and yard, you're helping them get more of the physical activity they need.

The toolkit Includes:

- This guide with information that supports you when you're having conversations with your clients
- A brochure for your client (English, Traditional Chinese, Vietnamese, Italian, Greek, Arabic versions available)
- A planner template for your client
- A tip sheet with ideas you can share with your clients about easier, efficient or more active ways to do household tasks.

## MORE ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity reduces the risk and can slow the progress of chronic diseases like diabetes and arthritis. It can help recovery from illness or injury. And it can help us, and the older people we work with, to keep flexible and our muscles strong.

Moving our body throughout the day also improves energy, mental wellbeing, memory and can help with sleep. It helps older people stay more independent and have more good days.

# Older people can be physically *active*

It's common for people to see older people as frail and unable to take on many of their household tasks. Many older people have this belief too. These beliefs can limit older people's ability to keep active.

Ageing does lead to changes in how our bodies work but it's possible to keep active and keep improving or regaining function as we age.

We now know that the best way to recover from illness or injury is to have appropriate movement.

If an older person stops doing an activity completely and someone does it for them, they risk losing the ability to do that activity in the future.

Every person is unique, you can support your clients to keep active in ways that are suited to what they like to do, their current abilities and situation.

## HAVE CONVERSATIONS

Talk to your supervisor so you're familiar with your client's care plan. Now you're ready to have conversations with your client about how you can support them to achieve what's important to them.

Household tasks are an important part of these conversations.

Remember to take it slow. Each conversation can be short, casual and build on the previous one. People don't change behaviour in one go. It's a slow process. Most of us are resistant to change.

Focus on your client's strengths. Talk about what they can do, rather than what they can't.

Ask them what tasks they like to do around the home, yard and garden. Support them to make these tasks as active as possible.

Your client may have been looking after their household for a very long time and have strong ideas about how things are done. Your role is to support them to keep doing their household tasks as their abilities change.

If you haven't already, read the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care's [Conversational Tips](#) resource. It's short and has lots of helpful tips about having conversations with clients.

# How to use this toolkit with your clients

Here's some ideas about how you can have conversations with your clients.

## VISIT 1

Leave the Keeping active around your home brochure with your client in their preferred language. Mention it contains some ideas about how doing more of the household tasks they enjoy is a great way to get more movement in their day. Moving more can help them have more good days.

## VISIT 2

Ask your client if they've read the brochure and if anything stood out to them. This may trigger a conversation where they share their ideas about how they want to approach their household tasks.

You can respond to their questions and ask if they'd like any support for their next step. The Keeping Active around the home tip sheet gives you helpful information you can share with your client.

You'll be able to see from your client's response and body language if they need help with motivation or confidence.

Ask if they'd like a planner to help plan their activities. Leave a few copies of the planner that comes with this toolkit. If you have time, ask them if they'd like to fill it out with you now.

## VISIT 3

Follow up. Make it part of a casual conversation. How did they get on with the planner? How did it help? Encourage the client to share their thoughts and ideas for being more active in the home. Do they have questions? What can you do to support them?

## VISIT 4

Ask your client how they went with their household tasks this week. What did they enjoy most? How are they feeling? What are their energy levels like?

If they've been more active and are feeling better, drawing their attention to this can help reinforce the benefits of being more active.

If they're feeling the same or had a setback, it's good to reinforce that this is something that happens and is ok. It's a positive achievement if your client was able to do some tasks, even if they were small.

## NEXT VISITS

You'll find at every visit you'll be able to casually ask your client a question about some aspect related to being more active in their home or garden.

Every time you and your client talk, the idea about being more active is taking seed. An awareness of the benefits of movement is growing. The changes may be small but every small change is beneficial.

## REMEMBER

Your supervisor is there if you need to discuss how best to work with your client at any stage.



# What if your client is not open to being more *active*?

Your client may not read the brochure or have ideas about how they can be more active. They may not want to make changes. It's very natural to not want to change behaviour.

You could mention you found the planner template helpful and ask if they'd like to use it to plan their

household tasks for the week.

If there are activities you know your client likes, such as gardening, make sure to encourage them to include this in their week as well as something fun for their rest day.

## PROGRESSING ACTIVITIES

It's your role to support your clients to work within their current ability. This means supporting your client to progress as their abilities change. Let them know that if they slowly progress their activities they can have more good days, stay more independent and continue to live in their own home for longer.

If your client is not progressing, that's ok. Sometimes maintaining their current level is the goal. If your client has a setback, is recovering from illness or injury you might need to regress the activity to a less active stage. Talk to your supervisor about this.



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Here are two examples of how activities can progress.

## DRYING CLOTHES

### Stage 1

Your client hangs their washing on a clothes rack to dry inside because they aren't able to walk outside.

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You notice improvements in their balance and ability to walk and ask them how they're feeling. Do they feel able to do more?

↓  
You and your client feel that progressing the task is a good idea. You feed this back to your supervisor.

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### Stage 2

Your supervisor has given you the go ahead to progress your client's activity. You move the clothes rack so your client has further to walk.

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Check in with client, feed back to supervisor, approval for next step.

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### Stage 3

The client hangs their clothes on the outside line. They use a clothes basket on wheels with small loads of washing.

↓  
Check in with client, feed back to supervisor, approval for next step.

↓

### Stage 4

The client carries clothes to the outside line in a bucket. Using the basket on wheels would be easier but your client would miss an opportunity to get stronger.

Look for opportunities to slowly progress tasks, talk to your client, feed back to your supervisor and work with your client to build their abilities and confidence.

## MEAL PREPARATION

### Stage 1

Your client is not preparing their meals. You suggest your client could sit to prepare meals. They think this is a great idea.

↓  
They have been sitting to prepare their meals for a while and you notice they're getting stronger and have more energy. You talk to them about the possibility of standing for a short time to prepare their meals. Standing is more active than sitting. The client says they feel up to trying this.

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You feed this back to your supervisor and get approval to go to the next stage.

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### Stage 2

Your client stands for 5 minutes to prepare their meal and then sits to complete the task.

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Check in with client, feed back to supervisor, approval for next stage

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### Stage 3

The client stands for 10 minutes.

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Check in with client, feed back to supervisor, approval for next stage

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### Stage 4

The client stands for 20 minutes.

### Remember

If your client can't manage standing, that's fine. They're working to their current ability by sitting and preparing their meal.

# When to get more help for your client

If you notice improvements, setbacks or issues feed this back to your supervisor straight away. Your client may need their plan reviewed or an assessment.

Is there a family member, friend or neighbour who can help with heavy activities or improvements to the home and garden?

Would your client benefit from a physiotherapist or occupational therapist who can help find safe ways to do things? They can also work with the client to build their strength and confidence.

## RESOURCES

These resources are good to refer to regularly. They will reinforce your training and help you to support your clients.

### [Conversational tips](#)

How to have better conversations with your clients.

### [Practical guide for embedding wellness and reablement into service delivery](#)

This guide has been developed for front-line staff to support them to effectively deliver wellness and reablement approaches to their clients. It covers how to deliver support focussing on client strengths to continue living at home as independently as they can.

### [Easy Living Equipment Guide](#)

## OTHER READING

If you have clients who are motivated to get more movement into their lives you could suggest this book.

### [Dynamic Aging: simple exercises for whole body mobility](#)

This book is by biomechanist and movement teacher Katy Bowman. She wrote it with a group of older women. It's about using simple exercises to feel better and get back to living vitally no matter your age.

## REFERENCES

Australian Government. 2021. *A Practical Guide For Embedding Wellness And Reablement Into Service Delivery*.

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