

# Celebrate

## Active Aging Week

October 2nd - October 8th, 2023



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Active Aging in Manitoba (AAIM) once again joins the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA) in promoting Active Aging Week, held October 2nd - October 8th, 2023. Active Aging week is a weeklong campaign that celebrates the positivity of aging and living actively and promotes the benefits of an overall healthy lifestyle! Active Aging Week also showcases the many capabilities of older adults.

This week is meant to celebrate how positive the process of aging can truly be. Active Aging Week encourages adults over the age of 50 to take advantage of all that life has to offer!

The 2023 theme is, **Celebrate the Contributions of Older Adults.**

Many people have negative ideas and attitudes about aging. Positive images of aging can help get rid of myths and stereotypes. For example, some people believe that getting older means being inactive, unhealthy, and dependent – but this is rarely the case. In fact, older adults are living longer, healthier, more independent lives than ever before!

Older people make important contributions to society, as friends and companions, neighbours, advisors, family members, caregivers, volunteers, employers and employees, business owners, artists, musicians, and community leaders. Celebrating older adults is an important way to promote positive images of aging!

We are encouraging every community in Manitoba to take part and celebrate healthy, active aging, sharing their experience of being an active living community in Manitoba.

We want people to reflect and reconnect with activities. Slow down, and carve out some time for some self-care. Take a walk with friends, try yoga or tai chi, take up a new hobby, or try a new sport. Experience your favourite park this fall - try Nordic Pole Walking, bird watching, or photography, and enjoy the fall colours Manitoba offers. The possibilities are endless, and AAIM believes you are never too old to try something new!

AAIM is encouraging every community in Manitoba to celebrate healthy, active aging and share their experience of being a great active aging community. Don't be left out – get involved!

The guidelines are simple; events can be planned or a community can opt to highlight an existing program with older adult participants as the focus (for example Tuesday Tai-chi class). Community organizers can take the lead by exploring creative ways to invite, introduce and involve older adults in events and activities. Take this opportunity to invite older adults to join in on the fun and experience what your group offers!

### For more information, contact us:

**Phone:** 204-632-3947 **or toll free:** 1-866-202-6663

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**Visit our website:** [www.activeagingmb.ca](http://www.activeagingmb.ca)



# The Benefits of Active Aging

An active social life allows older adults to experience an array of benefits that help to enhance their overall well-being. Some of the main benefits include:

## Enhanced Mental Health

Socializing can help older adults feel loved and needed as their lives are affirmed by their activities and those with whom they interact. Being around other people, especially if you're doing something fun or rewarding, helps us keep a positive outlook on life.

## Sense of Belonging

Enjoying the company of others with similar personalities or interests helps us feel like we belong. The need to belong may be more intense for those who may have lost a spouse, family member or friend. Engaging with others can cultivate new friendships and can create lasting bonds.

## Better Self-Esteem

The more people socialize or participate in activities with others, the more they benefit by feeling like they contribute to their community. Any positive interaction with friends, family or neighbours can help us feel confident in ourselves and our abilities.

## Improved Physical Health

When we have good conversations or do things we love with others, our bodies release health-promoting chemicals that boost the immune system and make us feel physically well. Also, socializing promotes an active lifestyle and better nutritional intake. Older adults who are isolated are more likely to skip meals, whereas socially active adults often share meals with friends and family.

## Increased Cognitive Functioning

Socializing is also key to keeping the brain sharp as we age. An active social life encourages us to continue learning, observing and responding to the world. Conversation and activity are great for exercising the mind and can potentially lower the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

## Purposeful Living

Having somewhere to go, something meaningful to do, or people to see helps us get excited for the day. When we build strong relationships with others, we gain a sense of fulfillment, and spending quality time with those we love reminds us that life is worthwhile.

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# How to Celebrate Active Aging Week

## Host an event

Consider hosting an Active Aging Week event in your community. This is one of the best ways you can help spread the word throughout your area! Make it fun and accessible!

## Share a personal story

If you have benefited from becoming active and adopting a healthier lifestyle, consider sharing your story with friends, family co-workers etc. Others are sure to benefit from learning about your wellness journey - you never know who you could inspire to make some positive changes!

## Talk about Active Aging Week on social media

Social media platforms are an excellent way to bring awareness to important initiatives. By discussing Active Aging Week on social media, you might just encourage someone to get out and start pursuing a healthier lifestyle.



# Why Active Aging Week is so Important

## Active Aging Week encourages older adults to get moving

Staying active and taking care of our minds and bodies is the secret to living, moving, and feeling better with age.

For some older adults who reside in assisted living communities, or have mobility issues, just getting out and about can present quite a challenge. Active Aging Week highlights all of the different ways that someone can participate in simple exercise. There truly is something for everyone.

## Active Aging Week challenges stereotypes

The focus of this week challenges society's expectations of aging by showing that older adults can live full, rewarding lives regardless of age or health. In fact, many adults have rekindled a former hobby or passion or in most cases, started a new one. They are more active. More social. More engaged. According to the ICAA, "Active Aging Week challenges society's diminished expectations of aging by showing that, regardless of age or health conditions, adults over 50 can live as fully as possible in all areas of life—physical, social, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, vocational and environmental."

## Active Aging Week creates a sense of community

We're much more likely to accomplish our goals if we have other people helping to keep us accountable. Active Aging Week helps bring communities of adults together to work towards a common wellness cause or goal.



For more ideas, resources and information, be sure to check out the International Council on Active Aging website: [www.icaa.cc](http://www.icaa.cc)

# Ideas for Planning an Event or Activity

Hosting free events for older adults is an excellent way to draw participants into your facility, centre or community. People can feel isolated as they age, so these events give them the opportunity to meet new people, have new experiences, and continue learning. Here are some great ideas for local events, however small or large you are planning:

## Host an Open House

Open house events help to promote involvement in the local community and give you opportunities to network and promote your facility or organization. At an open house you can connect with potential participants, members, or volunteers etc. At an open house event, you can serve a meal (even something as simple as coffee and snacks), offer entertainment, presentations/demonstrations or group activities.

## Host a Speaker Series

Hosting a speaker series on different topics is a great way to bring your target audience to your community. This can be a great resource for older adults. Lectures by doctors, physical therapists, hearing specialists, and other experts are all great ideas. Some popular topics for the speaker series might include appropriate medical subjects like arthritis and anxiety/depression.

## Host an Expo

Another idea is to host an expo. You can rent a hall or host the event on your own grounds. Invite organizations to sponsor tables and promote their programs and services. You can also invite speakers to run workshops or demonstrations. Prepare a presentation about your own organization as well.

### Here are other types of activities that you can organize:

- Concerts/old time dances
- Classes (cooking, languages or art etc.)
- Health fairs
- Holiday parties
- Luncheons/old fashioned teas
- Group exercise programs
- Walking Groups/nature walks
- Bake or craft sale
- Volunteer as a group outing

You could also work with churches and hospitals in your area to host workshops. For example, you could offer a workshop with tips for caring for an aging parent. Make business cards and pamphlets readily available to participants.

Whatever type of event or gathering you choose to organize, you can suit it to your particular needs. Make it as large or small, or simple as you need it to be! Events are a great idea and can provide great opportunities to get the word out about your organization while allowing you to make a difference in your local community!



# Promoting your Event or Activity

Whether you are a motivated individual or part of a group or organization looking to inspire older adults to get active, special events and activities are a great way to encourage them to connect with their peers and stay involved within their local communities. The event or activity doesn't have to be huge or complicated either. It could be something as simple as offering a craft workshop at a local community hall, arranging a card tournament, cooking class or organizing walking or birdwatching outings. Or better yet, simply showcase a pre-existing event, for example a regular weekly yoga class. The possibilities are endless - and we want to emphasize that events do not have to be complex in order to be successful. Simply send us what you already have planned and we will add it to our calendar!

We also know that some may be seasoned organizers and planners, while others may not. However, if you do decide to organize an event, promotion is a key factor in the overall success, no matter how large or small the event or activity may be. Below are some guidelines and tips for planning an event for those who want a little support. You can plan one activity or a more significant event – it's up to you!

## Organization is key

Before you start promoting your event, it's essential to make sure you are organized, be sure you know what your goals are and that you know who you are targeting in your promotion efforts.

## Know your audience

It is useful to collect the names and contact information of all the attendees afterwards, so you can stay in touch. Follow up after your event on a regular basis to promote your centre, facility or organization and keep people informed as to what is coming up next!

## Keep your message simple

People are busy and often bombarded with too much information. This can be particularly overwhelming for older adults. Make it easy for them to understand your message. Most importantly, keep it clear and consistent everywhere you promote your event.

## A picture is worth a thousand words

It's a cliché for a reason - visual images often stick with people more than words do. These days, social media options make it easy to include so much more than just text in your posts. Add pictures of past events, your event location and behind the scenes preparations for the big day.

## Get people excited

Creating a buzz before your event is crucial in generating interest and promoting participation. Send out reminders, create a customized web banner on your website 'Save the Dates', include pertinent fun facts, whatever you think will help get people thinking about your event! With social networking tools such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram it is easier and more affordable than ever before!

## Use relatable language

That doesn't mean you can't make things funny or interesting, it just means you should avoid using trendy slang, certain acronyms or terms that older adults may not be familiar with. Stick to fun, friendly and appropriate language in all of your promotions.



## Be mindful of possible limitations

Factors such as participants with physical limitations or cognitive disabilities will change the way activities will have to be organized. Therefore it is important for you to plan for your event to be as accessible as possible. Planning ahead for this means that you can be properly prepared.

Once you have considered the physical needs of your potential participants, you will want to ensure that the activity allows everyone in the group to participate and enjoy themselves. Ultimately, the goal is not simply to get people in the door but to ensure that you are able to provide participants with a full and meaningful experience, regardless of ability.

## Be aware of tripping hazards – especially stairs

While it's true that the risk of falling increases with age, that certainly doesn't mean there aren't steps you can take to lower that risk at your event. For example; if there is a change of height it needs to be gradual or very well marked. If there are cables or cords on the ground, they need to be covered. Make sure walkways are well marked and clear of unnecessary obstacles. Make sure that your guests can get around as easily and safely as possible!

## Have enough (and appropriate!) seating

Sometimes events seem to lack seating options for everyone. This may be intentional because you want your participants to mingle, or due to space constraints – you can fit more people if they are standing rather than sitting. However, many older people are less comfortable on their feet. Having enough comfortable seating is important for those who cannot remain standing or mobile for long periods.

## Keep a slower pace

Don't rush through your event. Keep the pace a bit slower to make sure that all of your attendees are on the same page, giving them more time to enjoy and appreciate information, rather than having them feel like they are being pushed from one thing to the next. Make participants feel that they are worth your time!

## Make sure there are enough breaks

Even though your event is fun and interesting, it may be overwhelming for older adults. Make sure there are regular and frequent breaks that provide attendees enough time to use the washrooms, make a phone call, take medications or have a snack etc.

## Keep technology simple, but don't underestimate participants

Make sure that the technology that you ask your participants to use is appropriate for both you and them.

## Accessibility and transportation

Remember to include information in all of your printed material, website, and e-mail that includes as much information as you can or at least full contact information for anyone who has a question about accessibility or requires an accommodation or local transportation of any kind in order to participate.



# The Importance of Social Engagement

For older adults, possibilities for social participation often change for various reasons, such as deteriorating health, the loss of a partner, the loss of friends or reduced opportunities for social interactions associated with, for example, retirement.

Activities that involve interaction with others can greatly improve their health and quality of life. Those who engage regularly in activities with friends or family, or who have someone to talk to often have a more positive outlook. Participating in hobbies and activities with others can also help them find pleasure and purpose in life during difficult times. Some of the main benefits include:

## Enhanced Mental Health

Isolation is one of the leading causes of depression in older adults. Loneliness can easily turn to feelings of worthlessness and despair. On the other hand, socializing can help older adults feel loved and needed as their lives are affirmed by the activities they do and by those with whom they interact. Being around other people, especially if you're doing something fun or rewarding, helps us keep a positive outlook on life.

## Sense of Belonging

Enjoying the company of others who have similar personalities or interests helps us feel like we belong somewhere. For those who may have lost a spouse, family member or friend, the need to belong may be more intense. Engaging with others can cultivate new friendships and can create lasting bonds.

## Better Self-Esteem

Self-esteem can plummet for those who have trouble doing as much as they used to or are alone too often. The more people socialize or participate in activities with others, the more they benefit by feeling like they contribute to their community. Any kind of positive interaction with friends, family or neighbors can help us feel confident in ourselves and our abilities.

## Improved Physical Health

When we have good conversations or do things we love with others, our bodies release health-promoting chemicals that boost the immune system to ward off illness and make us feel physically well. Also, socializing promotes an active lifestyle and better nutritional intake. Older adults who are isolated are more likely to skip meals, whereas those who are socially active often share meals with friends and family.

## Increased Cognitive Functioning

Socializing is also key to keeping the brain sharp as we age. Having an active social life encourages us to continue learning, observing and responding to the world around us. Conversation and activity are great for exercising the mind and can potentially lower the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

## Purposeful Living

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please visit our website at [www.activeagingmb.ca](http://www.activeagingmb.ca)*



# Get the shot, not the flu!

## Who is at risk from the flu?

The flu is highly contagious and can spread up to 6 feet away. People with the flu are contagious one day before developing symptoms and up to 5-7 days after.

Children and seniors are not the only groups at risk of the potentially devastating consequences of flu. Adults are also at risk! Almost 1 in 2 adults 50+ have a chronic condition in Canada, putting them at higher risk of flu complications. Diabetes, cardiovascular disease and respiratory conditions are just some of the chronic diseases that can be worsened from the flu.

The seasonal flu vaccine is the most effective way to reduce the risk of a severe flu infection and prevent hospitalizations and other serious complications.

## Factors that can increase your risk

### DIABETES

If an adult has diabetes, the flu can:

- Heighten the risk for severe flu-related complications
- Impair blood glucose levels and increase risk of diabetic ketoacidosis (a serious complication that may occur resultant of abnormal insulin activity)
- Increase the risk of hospitalization by 3x and admittance to the ICU by 4x

### CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Cardiovascular disease can include heart attacks, heart failure, inflammation of the heart, stroke & blood clots. In these cases, the flu can:

- Trigger serious cardiovascular complications within a few days following a flu infection
- Increase risk of heart attack 6-10x
- Increase risk of stroke 3-8x and admittance to the ICU by 4x

### RESPIRATORY DISEASE

If an adult has a respiratory condition, the flu can:

- Trigger asthma attacks, worsen asthma symptoms, which can also lead to pneumonia and other acute respiratory diseases
- Decrease lung function and increase susceptibility to infection
- Result in worsening asthma and COPD

***\*Ask your doctor for more information on the different types of vaccines, and learn which is right for you.***

***\*\*Supported by an educational grant from Sanofi Pasteur.***