



Club Wellbeing Movement



Movement is medicine. And the dose is smaller than you think.

We do not need to run marathons. We do not need a gym membership or expensive equipment.

What the evidence shows, consistently and clearly, is that regular moderate movement is one of the single most powerful things we can do for our physical health, our mental health, and our brain. And for most of us, the bar is lower than we have been led to believe.

What Movement Actually Does

From a physiological perspective, movement is extraordinary. Even a single 20-minute walk triggers a cascade of beneficial effects:

In the body

- **Reduces blood pressure** and improves cardiovascular health
- **Improves blood sugar regulation** and reduces diabetes risk
- **Strengthens bones** and reduces fracture risk
- **Reduces chronic pain** and inflammation
- **Preserves muscle mass** and physical independence
- **Improves gut function** and digestive health
- **Strengthens the immune system**

In the Brain

- **Releases endorphins** - the brain's natural mood lifters
- **Increases dopamine and serotonin** - reducing anxiety and depression
- **Stimulates BDNF** - a protein that grows new brain cells and protects against dementia
- **Improves sleep quality** significantly
- **Sharpens concentration** and decision-making
- **Reduces cortisol** - the stress hormone

How Much Is Enough?

Australian Guidelines for Older Adults¹

- **Balance exercises** on at least three days per week, especially if there is any fall risk
- **Break up long periods of sitting** - stand or move for a few minutes every hour
- **20-30 minutes** of moderate aerobic activity per week
- **Muscle-strengthening activities** on at least two days per week

If this feels like a lot — start with ten minutes a day. Research shows even this makes a measurable difference.

Movement and the Brain

Exercise triggers the release of a natural protein in the brain, sometimes called '**fertiliser for the brain**', that helps grow new brain cells and keeps existing ones healthy. This alone is reason enough to move every day.



The Four Types of Movement That Matter

Ideally, a weekly routine includes a mix of all four. But starting with any one of them is far better than waiting until you can do all of them.

Type of Movement	What it Does	Examples
Aerobic / Cardio	Heart and lung health, mood, sleep, brain function, energy	Walking, swimming, dancing, cycling, water aerobics
Strength / Resistance	Preserves muscle mass, bone density, metabolism, and independence	Resistance bands, light weights, bodyweight exercises
Balance & Flexibility	Reduces fall risk - the leading cause of injury in older adults	Tai chi, yoga, stretching, standing on one leg
Incidental Movement	Adds up throughout the day - every bit counts	Gardening, housework, parking further away, taking stairs

What Gets in the Way - And What Helps

Common Barriers

- **Pain or health conditions** making movement feel risky or uncomfortable
- **"I was never sporty"** a lifelong belief that exercise isn't for them
- **Lack of energy** the cruel irony: movement creates energy, but you need some to start
- **No one to go with** solo exercise is much harder to sustain
- **Fear of injury or falling** very real and understandable, especially after a fall
- **Not knowing where to start** too many options can be as paralysing as none

What Actually Helps

- **Find something enjoyable.** Sustainability matters far more than intensity.
- **Move with others.** Group activity dramatically improves consistency and adds social connection.
- **Start absurdly small.** Five minutes counts. Walking to the letterbox counts. Progress builds.
- **Attach it to something existing.** A walk after breakfast. Stretches before bed.
- **Talk to your GP first** if pain or health concerns are a barrier - a referral to a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist can be transformative.

Movement as Mood Medicine

For anyone experiencing low mood, anxiety, or low motivation, movement is one of the most evidence-based interventions available.

Studies consistently show that regular aerobic exercise is as effective as antidepressant medication for mild to moderate depression, with no side effects, and with significant additional physical benefits.

**It does not need to be intense.
A daily walk, taken consistently,
can genuinely change how you feel.**



A Note for Lions Clubs

Clubs are well placed to build movement into their culture, not through formal exercise programs, but through the small choices that add up.

- Suggest a short walk before or after meetings
- Organise active social events - bowls, golf days, community walks
- Notice members who have become less active and find a gentle way to invite them along

***Movement is more likely when it is social. Lions Clubs are social by nature.
The combination is powerful.***

A Moment to Reflect

How much are you moving at the moment, honestly?

What has got in the way, and is that barrier something that could be worked around?

Is there one form of movement you used to enjoy that you could return to?

Your body was built to move. It is never too late to start - and it is always worth it



Thriving Members. Thriving Clubs.

An Australian Lions Wellbeing Foundation Initiative alwf.org.au/tmtc

Created in Partnership with Andrew Fuller - Clinical Psychologist, Family Therapist & Author andrewfuller.com.au

Wellbeing Series:

Social Connection | Anxiety | Tricky Conversations | Identity | Motivation | Sleep | Movement | Nutrition |

