

Personal goals may facilitate or hinder older adults' striving for exercise

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Although exercise may significantly promote healthy aging, many older adults remain sedentary. Based on a study conducted in the Gerontology Research Center at the University of Jyväskylä, one reason for this may lie behind older adults' personal goals.

"We noticed that those older women who had personal goals related to their own or other people's health, or to independent living, less frequently set exercise as one of their personal goals. Thus it seems that when life situation requires focusing goals on health issues or simply managing daily life at home, people may not have the energy to strive for [exercise activity](#)," says doctoral student Milla Saajanaho from the Gerontology Research Center.

The results of the study showed that those [older women](#) who had set exercise as one of their personal goals were more likely to exercise actively and also maintained their exercise activity higher in an eight-year follow-up. Personal goals related to cultural activities and to busying oneself around home further increased the likelihood for high exercise activity. Being generally active in life also seems to be beneficial for exercise activity.

"When we are trying to promote [older adults'](#) exercise activity, we should always take into account their individual [life situation](#), which may require focusing on other things in life instead of exercising. By considering all personal goals a person has, we could also find ways to include exercise into his/her life. And as so many older adults have

personal goals related to health, it would be beneficial to remember that striving for exercise is also beneficial for maintaining health and functioning," Saajanaho concludes.

The study was conducted in the Gerontology Research Center, which is a joint effort between the University of Jyväskylä and the University of Tampere, and it is part of the Finnish Twin study on Ageing. In total 308 women between the ages of 66 to 79 participated in the study.

More information: Saajanaho M, et al. Older women's personal goals and exercise activity: an eight-year follow-up, *J Aging Phys Activ.* 2013 Aug 12. [journals.humankinetics.com/jap ... eight-year-follow-up](https://journals.humankinetics.com/jap...eight-year-follow-up)

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