

Exercise more for better fitness after retirement



Middle-aged people over 55 years of age in particular should be doing more to keep fit as they approach retirement age because of the physical, mental and social benefits of being active, says a study.

"Adults are spending more years of their life working than ever before. Retiring is a life-changing event which provides all sorts of opportunities - but it coincides with declining physical activity, health and wellbeing," said the study's lead author Charlotte Salter from the University of East Anglia in England.

"From the age of around 55, people begin thinking about retirement and making plans for their future," Salter said.

For the study, researchers worked to gather insight about the relationship between retirement and physical activity.

More than 1,000 over-55s took part in an online "Physical Activity and Retirement Transitions" survey about their physical activity levels and expectations and experiences of retirement. The research team also held focus groups and interviews with people at retirement age about staying physically active.

"In order to enjoy a fit and healthy retirement, a really key thing is that people need to maintain their physical fitness through their fifties and beyond. "But we found that there are many barriers to this - from poor health, lack of motivation and the cost and availability of sports, activities and fitness classes, to not having enough time - due to work or in many cases because of caring responsibilities," Salter added.

The report showed how employers and healthcare providers could do more to promote physical fitness to people over 55. And that sports centres and community fitness projects could also play more of a part in encouraging healthy ageing.

While retirement can free up time, deteriorating health and wellbeing often become a new barrier. That is why it is so important to maintain fitness in the lead up to retirement.

"There is no one-size-fits all approach. But we found that activity that is combined with socialising, or other purposeful actions such as dog walking, gardening, housework, childcare or volunteering, were all good ways for over-55s to remain active," she added.