

Interventions to promote or maintain physical activity during and after the transition to retirement: an evidence synthesis

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Plain English summary

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The period around retirement may present a good opportunity to provide interventions that aim to increase or maintain physical activity in older adults. People finishing work may have opportunities to take up new activities or expand current activities. It is known that there are inequalities in society on the basis of socioeconomic status with regard to those who are more physically active in retirement and those who are less active.

We aimed to examine research that has already been published. We looked for studies that describe outcomes following interventions, or studies that describe the views of older adults as regards physical activity programmes. We searched for, and found, a large number of papers that were systematically analysed, in order to bring the results together.

We found only one paper that had been carried out in adults who were about to retire or were recently retired. All of the other studies included wider age ranges of older adults, and few mentioned how many of these adults were retired. The different types of interventions that we found included: training of health-care professionals; counselling and advice giving; group sessions; individual training sessions; in-home programmes; and community-wide initiatives.

Most of the approaches reported could apply to, and be beneficial for, those adults nearing retirement. However, the studies measured physical activity in many different ways, not all of which were meaningful. Older adults viewed enjoyment and socialising as important elements within activity programmes, but few interventions focused on this. The time around retirement is a significant point of life change, but little research has focused on this period.

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