





The benefits of regular physical activity for improving and maintaining health and well-being are well established for people of all ages, gender and abilities. Recent census data (2011) shows that Ireland's population is aging. The population in Special Olympics is no different.

Special Olympics sports programmes are open to any person with an intellectual disability from 6 years of age. Many adults continue to participate in these sports programmes into older adulthood, but for others, there comes a time when they no longer wish to participate in competitive sport. When this happens, we must ensure that older adults with intellectual disabilities are provided with the information to continue to make positive health choices and to continue to live a physically active life after competitive sport.

This guide is not an exhaustive list but aims to provide athletes and clubs with information on some of the different options available to maintain active lifestyles when an athlete chooses to no longer have an involvement in Special Olympics.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

The National Guidelines on Physical Activity for Ireland recommend the following:

- Aerobic Exercise:** At least 30 minutes a day of moderate intensity activity on 5 days a week or 150 minutes per week. Shorter bouts of exercise can be accumulated towards the guidelines.
- Muscle strengthening exercises:** Weight training or body resistance exercises performed on 2 days per week.
- Flexibility exercises:** Activities such as stretching or yoga performed on 2 days per week.
- Balance:** Older adults with poor balance have a higher risk of falls and subsequent injury. For anyone with poor balance, exercises focused on improving balance should be included on at least 3 days of the week.

## WHAT ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES ARE AVAILABLE FOR OLDER ATHLETES?

TYPE	WHAT IS AVAILABLE
<b>Multi-Activity</b>	Go for Life is an initiative by Age and Opportunity, which promotes greater participation in physical activity by older people. In addition, the programme offers training for individuals to become Physical Activity Leaders who then run physical activity sessions for their peers. For information, contact Age and Opportunity Ireland on +353 (0)1 8057709 or go to <a href="http://www.ageandopportunity.ie">www.ageandopportunity.ie</a>
<b>Walking</b>	In the Republic of Ireland, walking routes in many towns and cities, known as Slí na Sláinte have been developed by the Irish Heart Foundation. These are designed to encourage people to walk more frequently and to enjoy the benefits of a healthier lifestyle. For information, contact the Irish Heart Foundation on 01 6685001 or go to <a href="http://www.irishheart.ie/sli">www.irishheart.ie/sli</a>  In Northern Ireland, Highway to Health is an initiative by Chest, Heart and Stroke Northern Ireland. Walking routes have been developed in many towns and cities to encourage people to be more active. For information, contact Chest, Heart and Stroke Northern Ireland on +44 (0)28 9032 0184 or go to <a href="http://www.nichs.org.uk">www.nichs.org.uk</a>
<b>Lawn Bowls</b>	Lawn bowls is a game very similar to Special Olympics bocce. The aim of the game is to get your ball as close as possible to the jack (white ball). For information visit Irish Lawn Bowls at <a href="http://www.irishlawnbowls.ie">www.irishlawnbowls.ie</a> or the Northern Ireland Bowls Association at <a href="http://www.nibabowls.co.uk">www.nibabowls.co.uk</a>
<b>Yoga</b>	Yoga is a great way for Older Adults to exercise in a relaxed and calming environment. It helps increase muscle tone/strength, improve flexibility, balance and mood. For information, contact the Irish Yoga Association at <a href="http://www.iya.ie">www.iya.ie</a> or the Yoga Fellowship of Northern Ireland at <a href="mailto:info@yfni.co.uk">info@yfni.co.uk</a>