

## Older people urged to get moving to a new, scientifically researched exercise DVD

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While the post-Christmas period usually sees a glut of celebrity exercise DVDs hit the shops, a Birmingham researcher is launching an exercise DVD with a difference for an alternative date – Older Adults Day on Tuesday (1 October).

The DVD, has been produced in conjunction with specialist company Move It or Lose It, and is aimed specifically at adults aged 65 and above, is based on research carried out both in the US by Professor Bill Evans and by researchers at the University of Birmingham in the **MRC-Arthritis Research UK Centre for Musculoskeletal Ageing Research** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/mds/centres/mrc-musculoskeletal-ageing/index.aspx>).

The aim of the DVD is to encourage older adults, especially those who may be inactive due to a recent illness, to carry out a safe and fun set of exercises to preserve musculoskeletal mass and function – both of which are known to deteriorate with age and inactivity. Preserving muscle function is important, not only for fitness, strength and endurance but also to allow an older person to carry out normal daily tasks.

**Professor Janet Lord** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/iandi/lord-janet.aspx>), who is the director of the MRC-ARUK Centre and has developed the DVD, said “Switching to a more physically active lifestyle in older individuals could reverse the age-related deterioration in muscle mass, but adoption of such changes is notoriously difficult to achieve, and therefore exercises scientifically designed specifically for an older audience are required, which is what our DVD has done”.

Although it has been proven that physical activity is essential to maintain health and reduce chronic illness, cognitive decline and falls, still only 7 per cent of over 75s achieve the recommended minimum of 150 minutes per week.

Adoption of a more physically active lifestyle in older people could also reduce the risk of depression, and, in turn, the risk of infections acquired from a compromised immune system. Prof Lord has shown that depression caused by hip fracture can lead to reduced immune function. Together with a raised level of stress hormones, this can have a detrimental impact upon immunity after hip-fracture leading to an increase in morbidity and mortality.

Prof Lord said: “We know that after an illness such as a hip fracture, older adults struggle to get back to their previous level of physical functioning. Even older adults who are not unwell find it hard to get the motivation to exercise. This DVD uses some of the techniques we know help to motivate people to take part in exercise, such as the use of music and using older adults as demonstrators in the DVD. Following the programme will have benefits for their physical function and overall wellbeing”.

Exercise strategies in the new DVD include low load eccentric resistance exercise training (RET), shown to be more effective than conventional resistance training at increasing muscle mass and strength in older people. These novel exercise interventions will be extended to older people to counteract sarcopenia (the loss of muscle mass with ageing) and osteoporosis and improve metabolic health. The exercises can all be done at home with a chair and a resistance band.

The exercises in the DVD have been devised by Prof Lord, along with the Falls and Fracture Team at the University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Trust and Move it or Lose it, a Birmingham company which runs exercise classes to allow older people to stay mobile and maintain independence. The DVD is also designed to be an exercise plan which is easy for older people to take up initially, and adhere to in the longer term.

One of the stars of the DVD is Jenny Buchan, 71 and a retired teacher from Birmingham’s Children’s Hospital who spent 23 years teaching children with cancer and renal problems. Jenny joined Prof Lord’s 1,000 Elders group to help with research into ageing. Participants for various studies into ageing are drawn from the group.

Jenny, fills her time with voluntary work, holidays, walking and gym visits decided to take part in the DVD to inspire others to stay active, mobile and independent.

She said: “Living longer is not always a benefit if there is no real quality to that life – but retirement is a blessing if you use your time wisely and do all the things you’ve always wanted to do but never had the time for.”

### Notes to editors

Prof Janet Lord, Jenny Buchan and other older adults who took part in the DVD are available for interview.

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