# **Active Start**



# A program proven to increase physical activity

Active Start helps adults improve their health by making physical activity part of their lifestyle.

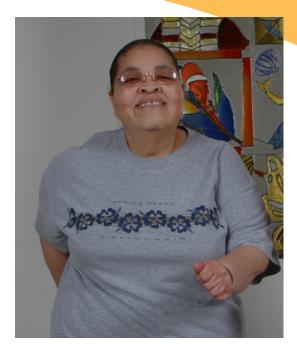
Winner of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Innovation in Prevention Award, Active Start is an evidence-based program designed to be facilitated by trained older adults. Active Start combines two courses, Active Living Every Day and ExerStart:

Active Living Every Day is a 20-week behavior change class recognized by the American Public Health Association's Award of Excellence in Program Innovation. At weekly meetings, participants explore and discuss strategies to fit physical activity into their routine in realistic ways and stay active even when difficult life situations arise.

**ExerStart** is a moderately paced beginning-level exercise course for sedentary adults to improve balance, endurance, flexibility, and muscle strength. In twice-weekly classes, participants learn safe, fun and effective exercises allowing them to improve their daily functioning.

# A Unique Combination

Unlike most fitness programs, Active Start is tailored specifically to older adults who want to start and maintain a more physically active lifestyle. Active Start teaches participants exercises and strategies to remain physically active. The program builds



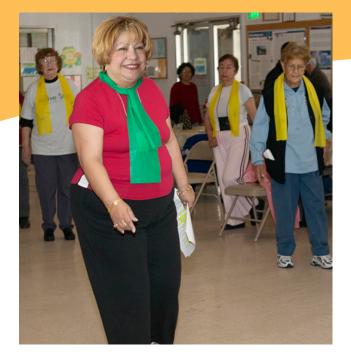
"I've learned I can be physical, a little at a time," says Jacqueline, who had two previous knee replacements. "Before this class I had difficulty doing everyday things. Now I can go shopping, even after the class."

confidence and skills of older adults who are not currently exercising but are interested in making exercise part of their routine. By offering exercise options, older adults become better able to exercise in various settings and overcome health challenges.

#### **Evidence for Active Start**

A study published in *The Gerontologist* provides evidence that Active Start's combined program of behavior change support and exercise helps older adults improve their physical health. Participants displayed significant improvements in strength, flexibility, and balance when compared to similar older adults who did not participate in Active Start.

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"In the beginning, some people came in dragging their feet, there were all sorts of excuses for why they couldn't do this or that. We modify things so they can do it. Now they march right in!"

Irene Lira, Active Start Lay Leader

### The impact of Active Start

Exercise does not need to be strenuous to be helpful. People of all ages can benefit from moderate levels of physical activity. Increased physical activity improves quality of life and reduces preventable health care costs. Regular physical activity greatly reduces a person's risks for heart disease, colon cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Physical activity also helps to control weight; contributes to healthy bones, muscles and joints; helps to relieve the pain of arthritis; reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression; and can decrease the need for hospitalizations, physician visits, and medications.

## Offering Active Start in your community

OASIS has helped partners plan and implement Active Start in community settings across the United States including senior housing, community centers, parks and recreation facilities and faith based organizations. Resources for program providers include:

- A replication report outlining best practices for program success
- A training program for facilitators
- Course manuals
- Templates for promotional materials
- An evaluation system that provides outcome reporting

For more information, contact us:
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Active Start was funded by the United States Administration on Aging and developed in partnership with the City of Los Angeles Department of Aging, under the leadership of Laura Trejo.

OASIS is a national non-profit organization that promotes successful aging through lifelong learning, health programs and volunteer engagement. The OASIS vision is to see that adults age 50-plus across the country have opportunities to pursue vibrant, healthy, productive and meaningful lives. Founded in 1982, OASIS serves more than 370,000 adults through partnerships in 40 cities. The OASIS Institute in St. Louis is the national headquarters.