

# Embec Care Ltd The Wise Choice Fact sheet

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND OLDER PEOPLE

### Hard facts

Only a very limited number of older people take enough exercise to maintain their functional independence.

- 45% of men and 79% of women aged 65 to 74 years are not fit enough to sustain continuous walking at a normal pace.
- 30% of men and 56% of women aged 65 to 74 years do not have sufficient thigh muscle strength to rise from a chair unaided.
- Amongst women aged over 55 years, only 50% have sufficient leg power to climb stairs easily.

Periods of immobility can leave older people too weak to carry out basic tasks for everyday living. Moreover, bed rest and immobilisation have a disastrous effect upon bone density, leading to frailty.

Source: Sports Council/HEA (1992), Allied Dunbar National Fitness Survey

### GOOD NEWS

**The good news** is that it is never too late to improve balance, strength and stamina.

- Physical activity has been found to delay the deterioration of functional capacity in older people significantly.
- Physical activity of appropriate vigour may greatly benefit very old people, even sedentary older people who begin exercising at an advanced age.
- It is not necessary to create sophisticated programmes: walking, shopping, gardening and housework can all be encouraged.

Physical activity helps combat heart disease, muscular tension, joint pain and osteoporosis. It improves circulation, stimulates digestion and aids sleep. It also heightens alertness, increases self-confidence and alleviates depression.

Source: Caroline Walker Trust (1995), Eating Well for Older People