



The National Programme for
Sport and Physical Activity for Older People

more older people
more active, more often

WINTER 2013 / SPRING 2014

newsletter

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Go for Life - The National Programme for Sport and Physical Activity for Older People

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**Age &
Opportunity**
Life is for
Living.



A message from the Go for Life team

Have you heard about the national guidelines on physical activity? The guidelines say that adults need to get at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity 5 days a week. What you might not realise is that 'adults' means us too, no matter how much older we are.

At Go for Life, along with the Irish Sports Council, we commission research on the attitudes and behaviours of Irish adults over 50. What we are finding is that there is a myth in Ireland that people need less activity as they age. This is not true, and what's worse is that

it is denying people all of the benefits they can get if they were to do 30 minutes each day.

Can you help us to dispel this myth? The next time someone says 'You should be slowing down at your age' or 'I do the garden once a week; that's enough activity for me', please put them right – it is 30 minutes most days.

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My Sport: Handball with Eddie Flynn



Eddie Flynn after his Ruby Masters Singles win against Antrim's Seamus Graham
Photo: Fiona Holohan

There was a handball court in our village and, every Sunday after mass, all the adults who played handball would compete in a small tournament. My job was to fetch the ball every time they hit it over the court. After the adults finished playing, we tried to play on the court and copy what they'd been doing. That's how I got interested in handball.

The GAA Irish Handball Council organises an All-Ireland series every year for people of all ages: from underage people to lads over 70. What keeps me in the game for so long

is that there is an age category for me. Once you pass the age of 35, you're categorised as a master handball player, and then there are other categories from 35 to 40, 40 to 45 and so on. I would be playing guys my own age: 70 plus.

It's kind of off season for me now until the inter-county competitions start in January. At the moment, I focus on training. I've heard that when you pass the age of 30, your muscle power decreases by 10% every decade, so I go to the gym twice a week to replace that. I actually really enjoy working out at the gym. I also play handball twice a week and, occasionally, I go for a walk with my wife, who is a walker. She walks three to four miles every day. Whenever I decide to give up handball, I will do more walking. It's fantastic.

Watch out for the **Get Ireland Walking** initiative coming to a county near you in **2014**.

Game On! The Go for Life Games 2013



Participants in the 2013 Go for Life Games
Photos: Tommy Clancy

The second Go for Life Games in June was a rip-roaring success. Teams came from as far afield as Cork and Waterford, with 13 counties in total coming together to play, to compete and to have some fun... a lot of fun.

The Games are a chance to celebrate being active and, of course, to show the superior skills of your county when they are pitched against your rival counties.

Once again, we were hosted by Dublin City University. Each county had a Scidils team, a Lobbers team and a Flisk team, supported by team managers, local co-ordinators, helpers and family supporters. Some teams had come through qualifiers in their region, others through local Sportsfests or activity days, aided and supported by our partners in the Local Sports Partnerships or the HSE around the country. Other counties came together and picked a lucky team of people from various groups to go to DCU and take part.

Our plans are already underway for the Go for Life Games 2014 where 21 counties will be represented. We've now grown so big that we plan to run over two days in June and we will host over 300 people in the finals. This will be one step closer to our vision: an All-Ireland Go for Life Games in 2015, with every county in Ireland represented.

The Go for Life FitLine

If you live in Cork, Dublin, Kilkenny, Louth, Meath or Wicklow there is a FitLine phone service near you that can give you advice and encouragement to get more active (especially if you are not part of a group or club). Find out more about FitLine by calling freephone 1800 303 545

Be a PAL and join in

Go for Life PALs workshops have been a major part of Go for Life since the start of the programme in 2001. A PAL is a Physical Activity Leader, someone who is already in your group who volunteers to lead people in enjoyable physical activity.

PALs workshops have a good mix of theory and practical ideas. PALs can then use this knowledge and skill to lead their peers in physical activity and sport. We now have nine workshops in the series: Basic Principles, Sit-Fit, Better Balance, Going Strong, Rolling and Bowling, Pitching and Tossing, Stepping and Strolling, PALs Skills and the most recent addition, Whirling and Twirling, Go for Life's Dance Workshop for PALs.

Whirling and Twirling is an energetic, fun workshop which features simple dance ideas

for people to practise in their groups. The workshop has a wonderful international feel with dances such as 'The Polish Shoemakers Dance', 'The German Clap Dance', 'The American Contra Dance', 'The Irish Circle Dance' and lots more.

Bridie Stuart from Tralee Ladies '99 Probus Club tried Whirling and Twirling with her group: "I thought the workshop was absolutely marvellous. Everybody would enjoy it, even if they were sitting down for it. Great to see all in great form and having a laugh and it brought out the best in us all. I would certainly recommend it to everyone."

Contact your county co-ordinator (listed on the back page) to find out about PALs workshops.

It stands to reason: 25 reasons to be physically active

This year, Age & Opportunity is celebrating 25 years of inspiring people to reach their full potential as they age. Apart from our work in sport and physical activity this year, we have also developed new education courses in active citizenship and community leadership, we have trained arts activity coordinators in care settings and we have built on our success with the Bealtaine festival so that increasing numbers of people are getting involved in creative activities across the year. When we started thinking about the number 25, we began to count up 25 reasons why we should all stay physically active.

Here are our Top 25:

1. Helps you to stay independent
2. Keeps you connected socially
3. Builds new friendships
4. Improves your mood
5. Helps you to sleep better
6. Keeps you healthy
7. Gives you more energy
8. Improves your overall appearance
9. Keeps your heart and lungs healthy
10. Improves your appetite
11. Helps you to fight age-related illnesses
12. Improves your bone density
13. Improves your joint mobility
14. Helps to keep your muscles supple and strong
15. Improves your balance and coordination
16. Combats your risk of obesity
17. Reduces your risk of falls
18. Improves your self-esteem
19. Helps your concentration
20. Gives you more confidence
21. Gets you to learn new skills
22. Can give you more purpose in your day
23. Reduces your stress or anxiety
24. Helps you to keep a positive outlook on life
25. Increases your 'feel good' factor

What's the story?

Best-selling author Sheila O'Flanagan talks to us about badminton, women in sport and how a good story can help people to see things differently.

Badminton is a passion of yours.

How does someone get involved with badminton in Ireland?

If you want to play, there are loads of entry points to get in at various levels and at various ages. All you need is a bit of hand-eye coordination; you need to be able to hit something! But most of us have a certain level of that within us so it's not that hard to pick up. The Badminton Ireland website, badmintonireland.com, will give you pointers as to what's happening in your area. A lot of clubs play out of local schools, so if you're near a community school, go in and ask 'Is there badminton here?'

There are also a lot of courses for people: complete beginners, improvers and so on. We have 'Return to Badminton' courses too for people who, maybe, played in their teens and now some of them are people who have retired, people who've reared families and want to get out and do something else. The course reminds you how to hit the shuttle, how to move on the court, and it sometimes does a bit of fitness as well. The main thing that the 'Return to Badminton' course does is get you back to a certain skill level so that you can go and join a club.

Has your game changed as you've gotten older?

You lose a level of the speed that you had in your twenties (and the recovery rate that you had) but I think you play smarter. You learn what you're good at and not so good at and you try to structure your game around that. Over the years, you get experience of what works and what shots will get results. I have to say I must be slower but we're still winning a lot of games so I must be doing something right.

Is it important to see more women playing sport in Ireland?

The media coverage of sport is very skewed towards men (of course, there is a whole thing of men expressing ALL of their emotions through sport. The only way they can say 'I love you, man' is when their sports team wins). I would love to see the media bias move towards women's sport. You go through pages and pages of men's sport, and quite obscure men's sport sometimes, before you see a little paragraph about, let's say, the women's rugby team. And yet, when we look at Sports Monitor, for example, and the participation of older people, more women are prepared to go out and try something new in sport.

The characters in your novels are often trying to overcome obstacles. Do readers come to you with their problems?

Thankfully not too much but a lot of people, when they get in touch with me, they'll say 'I was going through a bad time and I was reading your book and it helped me see things a bit differently' or 'I identified with one of the characters and I realised that I'm not the only one who thinks that way'. That, to me, is really nice and it makes me think 'Yes, my characters are real people, and real people identify with them'. Actually one guy wrote to me and he said 'I read your book 'Suddenly Single' and now I know why my girlfriend left me!' I want readers to see people having problems and how they are dealing with them, so when I get feedback from readers like that, I really enjoy it.

Sheila's latest book, 'Things We Never Say', is published by Headline Review. Check out her website www.sheilaoflanagan.com

HSE and LSP listings

Go for Life is run in partnership with the •Health Service Executive and the •Local Sports Partnerships.

Find out what is going on in your area by getting in touch with the coordinator nearest to you.

CARLOW

- Martha Jane Duggan (059) 913 6207
- Olive Fanning (059) 914 3630

CAVAN

- Colm Casey (049) 437 3110
- Nadine McCormilla (049) 437 8582

CLARE

- Geri Quinn (065) 686 5837
- John Sweeney (065) 686 5434

CORK

- Sheelagh Broderick (028) 40 488
- Michael Crowley (021) 466 5081

DONEGAL

- AnneMarie Crosse (074) 910 9114
- Myles Sweeney (074) 911 6078

DUBLIN

- Dublin City
Antonia Martin (01) 222 7598
- Dublin North
Ailis Brosnan (01) 882 3402
- Dublin South East
Jim Gorman (01) 274 4200
- Dublin South
Caroline Peppard (01) 463 2813
- Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown
Shane McArdle (01) 271 9507
- Fingal
Marion Browne (01) 890 6256
- South County Dublin
Thomas McDermott (01) 414 9000

GALWAY

- Paul Gillen (091) 548 323
- Galway City
Jason Craughwell (091) 536 459
- Galway County
Michael Curley (091) 476 509

KERRY

- Cora Carrigg (066) 718 4776
- Anne Culloty (064) 667 0767

KILDARE

- Syl Merrins (045) 980 547
- Caroline Peppard (01) 463 2813

KILKENNY

- Nicola Keeshan (056) 779 4990
- Meabh McGuinness (056) 776 1400

LAOIS

- Clodagh Armitage (057) 935 7824
- Caroline Myers (057) 867 1248

LEITRIM

- Geraldine Delorey (071) 913 5061
- Declan Boyle (071) 965 0005

LIMERICK

- Anne Costello (069) 61 430
- Limerick City
Elaine O'Connor (061) 333 600
- Limerick County
Phelim Macken (061) 496 428

LONGFORD

- Clodagh Armitage (057) 935 7824
- Ciaran Murphy (043) 334 3450

LOUTH

- Mary Browne (042) 932 4356
- Yvonne Gilsenan (046) 907 6400

MAYO

- Paul Gillen (091) 548 323
- Charlie Lambert (094) 904 7256

MEATH

- Yvonne Gilsenan (046) 907 6400
- Mary Murphy (046) 906 7337

MONAGHAN

- Colm Casey (049) 437 3100
- Michelle Murphy (042) 975 5126

OFFALY

- Clodagh Armitage (057) 935 7824
- Eamonn Henry (057) 934 6843

ROSCOMMON

- Noel Feeley (090) 663 0853
- Paul Gillen (091) 548 323

SLIGO

- Geraldine Delorey (071) 913 5061
- Deirdre Lavin (071) 916 1511

TIPPERARY

- Tipperary North
Elaine Cullinan (067) 43 604
- Tipperary North
Fionnuala Kenny (067) 46 675
- Tipperary South
Valerie Connolly (062) 64 737
- Tipperary South
Catherine O'Loughlin (052) 617 7930

WATERFORD

- Peter Jones (058) 21 191
- Susan Scully (051) 846 714

WESTMEATH

- Clodagh Armitage (057) 935 7824
- Sonja Statham (044) 939 0208

WEXFORD

- Nuala Harpur (053) 918 5781
- Fran Ronan (053) 917 6688

WICKLOW

- Garvan Hickey (0404) 20 208
- West Wicklow
Caroline Peppard (01) 463 2813
- Rest of Wicklow
Jim Gorman (01) 274 4200

Go for Life is an Age & Opportunity initiative funded by the Irish Sports Council.

Age & Opportunity is the national organisation that inspires everyone to reach their full potential as they age.

The Irish Sports Council plans, leads and co-ordinates the sustainable development of competitive and recreational sport in Ireland.