How important is exercise?
Exercise is important at all stages of life because it improves your quality of life, maintains a healthy weight, improves sleep, manages stress and benefits your long term health. Exercise is known to reduce the likelihood of getting type 2 diabetes by 40%, cardiovascular disease by 35%, falls, depression and dementia by 30%, joint and back pain by 25% and the risk of colon and breast cancer by 20%.

How much exercise do you need?
The amount of exercise you need to do each week depends on your age. To stay healthy, adults between 19 and 64 should do 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise such as cycling or fast walking every week AND strength exercises on two or more days a week that work all your major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms.)
If time is short an alternative is to do 75 minutes of vigorous activity such as running or a game of singles tennis every week AND strength exercises on two or more days of the week. The final alternative is to do a mix of moderate and vigorous activity every week e.g. two 30 minutes runs plus 30 minutes of fast walking equates to 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity AND again strength exercises on two or more days of the week.

1. Name 2 benefits of exercise.
2. By how much does it reduce your chance of getting type 2 diabetes?
3. How often should you try to be active?
4. How much moderate aerobic exercise should you do each week?
5. Name 3 aerobic activities.
6. What other exercise should you do each week?
7. Why?
8. Name 3 muscle strengthening exercises.
9. How are muscle strengthening exercises measured?
10. How many strength exercises should you try to do?
What counts as moderate aerobic activity?
Examples of exercise that requires moderate effort for most people include walking, water aerobics, ballroom and line dancing, riding a bike on level ground, playing doubles tennis.

Moderate activity will raise your heart rate, make you breathe faster and feel warmer. One way to tell if you are exercising at a moderate level is if you can still talk but you can’t sing the words to a song. Unfortunately daily chores like shopping, housework or cooking don’t count towards your 150 minutes because the effort isn’t enough to raise your heart rate but they are important nonetheless as they break up periods of sitting.

What counts as vigorous activity?
There is good evidence that vigorous activity can bring health benefits over and above that of moderate activity. Examples include jogging or running, swimming or cycling fast, singles tennis, football, energetic dancing and martial arts.

What activities strengthen muscles?
Muscle strength is necessary for all daily movement, building and maintaining strong bones, regulating blood sugar and blood pressure and maintaining a healthy weight. Muscle strengthen exercise are counted in repetitions and sets. A repetition is one complete movement of an activity, like a bicep curl or a sit up. A set is a group of repetitions. For each strength exercise you should try to do at least one set of 8 or 12 repetitions. To gain health benefits from strength exercises you should do them to the point where you find it hard to complete another repetition. Examples of muscle strengthening exercises include:
- Carrying or moving heavy loads such as groceries
- Activities that involve stepping and jumping such as dancing
- Heavy gardening such as digging or shovelling
- Exercises that use your body weight for resistance such as push ups or sit ups
- Yoga

What if you are over 65?
Older adults who do any amount of physical activity will gain some health benefits including maintaining good cognitive function and the more you do the greater the health benefits. To help maintain your balance and so reduce the likelihood of falls dance, do Tai Chi or play bowls. The same amount of exercise as younger adults, including muscle strengthening exercise, should be completed if at all possible.

All adults should minimise the time they spend sitting for extended periods either in front of the TV or a computer. And if they do have to sit try to break it up every so often with a quick run up and down stairs.