



Older people need tailored information on physical activity

Physical activity has been shown to have an effect on older people's wellbeing and independent life. However, many seniors are not active enough to promote their health and wellbeing. New technologies, such as activity monitors, have been shown to support more active lifestyle in other age groups.

A population based GASEL questionnaire got over 900 answers among people being 65 years or more and living in Oulu area. Based on the self-reported physical activity persons were categorized in inactive (moderate to vigorous activity less than once a week and light activity less than four times a week) and active groups. The differences between restricting factors of physical activity and the use of activity monitors were evaluated in these groups.

Almost all of physically inactive people and about half of the active people had at least one restricting factor for physical activity. In general laziness, illness or injury, and low mood or tiredness were typical factors among older people. Inactive group of people had more restrictive factors related to not having information on the matter: they did not know how to move, they were missing guidance for moving, and they did not know what kind of activity would fit them. However, this group did not feel like needing information on sports, but felt needing information on food and illnesses.

Around 45% of seniors used activity monitors. Mostly used technologies were pedometers, heart rate monitors, and mobile phones. Those who rated to be physically active felt that using monitors was interesting and useful, however, seldom necessary. Inactive seniors did not report feeling monitors useful or being interested in using them. In addition, they felt that monitors were not easy to use. Those who did not use activity monitors had typically also difficulties in using mobile phones or computers.

According to this, physically inactive people need tailored information for support the overcome of restricting factors for moving. On the other hand, the general development in technological skills may have an impact on the role of activity monitors for supporting physically active lifestyle among seniors.