

Singing is exercise



Is it ever too late to learn how to sing? The simple answer is no! Science supports that there's no upper age limit to [learning new things](#). In fact, the older you get, the more important it is to follow your passions and learn about what interests you.

Singing is an art that's probably been around for as long as humans have, existing in some form in all cultures. Regardless of your age or gender, the urge to sing may strike you when you're in good mood, while driving, cooking, or even just having a shower. You've probably done it recently, without really thinking about it.

Luckily for us, this cultural phenomenon has many physical, social, emotional, and cognitive benefits. This is because singing is both an art and, surprisingly, a type of [exercise](#), too.

How is singing exercise?

Exercise can be incidental, meaning it happens as a side-effect of doing something else.

Take [gardening](#) or housework for example, which can be like full body workouts. Even [painting](#) or [crocheting](#) will exercise muscles and joints in your hands, which can help with conditions such as [osteoarthritis](#).

Singing can also be a good source of movement and incidental exercise.

Here's how:

- Singing is aerobic. This means it gets your blood pumping and oxygenated, improving your cardiovascular health. Aerobic exercise is important in managing conditions like [high blood pressure](#) and [type 2 diabetes](#).
- Singing requires deep and controlled breathing, which exercises your lungs and diaphragm. So, it's a good way to improve your respiratory health.
- When you sing, you'll naturally be exercising various muscles in your throat, face, and abdomen. If you aim to maintain optimal posture for your singing voice, you may also be activating muscles in your back, shoulders, and neck, contributing to overall upper body strength.

Singing can make talking easier

Strengthening these upper body muscles can improve things like posture control, vocal strength, and articulation. This may boost your confidence. It could also make conversations less strenuous or tiring.

The ageing process can cause weaker vocal muscles, and a need for increased effort while talking or singing. But this change can be delayed. Controlled vocal exercises can help to maintain your vocal strength as you age.

It's not advised to put your voice under stress by pushing it harder when it's weak. However, regular and careful singing can be a useful exercise to make it stronger.

Where to get help with your voice

Looking for guidance managing changes to your voice? You may benefit from the professional advice of a vocal coach or voice therapist. They can help you with things such as breathing techniques and tips to avoid vocal strain.

If you're concerned about sudden or extreme changes to your voice, see an ear nose and throat (ENT) doctor. They can investigate potential causes, such as vocal cord lesions or haemorrhage. See your ENT doctor if you experience chronic voice hoarseness, or if you are a smoker and experience hoarse voice.

Singing is social

Not only can singing make talking easier; it can also make you talk more by increasing your opportunities to socialise. You can meet regularly with like-minded people by joining a choir.

Singing groups can be a great way to [connect with others in your community](#). These groups could be spaces created especially for older people, or they could be intergenerational. Singing is an activity that appeals to all ages, generations, languages, and cultures.

Singing can also be a fantastic way to bond with [grandchildren](#). You can teach your grandkids songs from your childhood and enjoy them together. The amazing thing is that you can share this joy even with babies who haven't yet mastered the art of speaking coherently.

Emotional benefits

Singing causes your brain to release endorphins which can reduce pain and improve mood as well as immune function. As long as you're not singing somewhere that makes you anxious, studies support that it decreases the amount of [stress](#) hormones in your body.

Singing is a creative outlet for emotional expression. So, it can help reduce depression and anxiety. It's also been shown to support mental health in people dealing with [grief](#).

Singing songs from your culture (perhaps in your native language, if you don't often get to speak it) can also bring you closer to your cultural identity. Sharing your pride in this identity fosters feelings of belonging and contentment.

You may also get a sense of accomplishment from:

- Improving your musical skills
- Increasing your vocal range
- Learning longer and more difficult songs
- Learning to work better with your fellow choir members over time

And you should feel proud of achievements that take effort. This promotes a mindset of growth and [lifelong learning](#), which can help to keep you happy and healthy as you age.

It's a brain exercise too!

Learning new songs is a good exercise for your brain. You're not only learning lyrics but also coordinating melodies and rhythms.

This stimulates many different areas of your brain at once, which can help you add to your cognitive reserve. That's your store of thinking abilities, which you can build up through your life.

Having lots of reserve can protect your thinking skills through age and disease. This can keep things like your [memory](#) and problem-solving skills stronger for longer. The trickier a song is to learn, the better it may be for building up your reserve.

Pro-tip

If you want to take this cognitive exercise to the next stage, add some [dance](#) moves to your singing routine. This will trigger the musical centres of your brain while also training your motor skills and spatial awareness.

Music and dementia

Creativity and artistic skills draw from many different areas of your brain. This means a skill such as singing can still be accessible to people with brain damage or [dementia](#). In fact, musical activities like singing and dancing can lessen your risk of developing dementia and may reduce the symptoms in people who have it.

Singing intervention programs have been shown to improve [mental health](#), mood, and feelings of belonging in people with dementia. And familiar songs from the past have encouraged conversation in people with Alzheimer's disease who otherwise may be less verbal.

More helpful information

Eager to start singing with new friends, but unsure where to look? You can browse the LiveUp activities database for choirs or singing groups in your area.

You may be able to find a choir of your peers, or people who share similar conditions to you.

For example, there are [choirs for people with Parkinson's](#). These are having great success in helping with voice, breathing, and swallowing problems, while also providing a fun and social environment.

If you need more information, take the [LiveUp quiz](#) or get in touch with one of our helpful team on 1800 951 971.



CONTACT US

Website: liveup.org.au

Email: support@liveup.org.au

Phone: 1800 951 971

Facebook: facebook.com/LiveUpAus

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