

Social isolation and physical inactivity among Seniors

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Contents:

1. [Senior residents challenges](#)
2. [Reasons for isolation](#)
3. [Understanding the problem](#)
4. [What is the Daily Dozen](#)
5. [Summary](#)
6. [Example used](#)

Senior residents challenges

You may already know that social isolation and physical inactivity are common among Seniors, especially in residences and apartment buildings.

There is however, a simple solution to address this issue. For many seniors the long, dark hallways are the only means to maintain their walking routine.

Installing a visual exercise guide in the hallways as a supplement to their walking routine will encourage Seniors to be more physically and socially active.

According to these [Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for older adults – 65 and older](#), adults aged 65 years or older should be physically active each day in order to minimize sedentary behaviour and achieve sufficient sleep.

Let me share a few reasons why in many cases it is hardly a reality.

Reasons for isolation

1. Lack of knowledge: Sometimes seniors don't know how, where and when to exercise.
2. Living conditions: Living alone, lack of internet access, technology and language barriers, immobility or weather.
3. Lack of a common area at the entrance of the building: Most of the common rooms are hidden away and hard to access. Not to mention, you need to bring someone to socialize with.

Understanding the problem

For the last several years I have volunteered at the [Catholic Center for Immigrants](#) as an English as a second language facilitator working with seniors. With a background in visual art, I was able to illustrate these Canadian physical Activity Guidelines for our seniors.

After a few trials, I realized that the guidelines for physical activity were too challenging and advanced for this group of seniors. We had to create a customized variety of exercises that seniors across Canada, both active and inactive could realistically work towards each day.

I met with [Dr Danielle Rolfe](#), a registered Kinesiologist, Ph.D. Exercise Science and volunteer exercise instructor with [South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre](#). She selected a set of exercises that would be appropriate for our seniors.

For months we tested these exercises with the seniors and let them decide which are their favourites. That's how the [Daily Dozen: Visual Exercise Guide for Seniors 65+](#) was created.

While testing the Daily Dozen with the seniors I met Barbara, a Canadian born, Ottawa community Housing senior resident. She was the one to suggest installing the visual exercise guide on the hallway walls for the benefit of all seniors in the building.

We obtained permission from the [Ottawa Community Housing](#) to install our visual exercise guide in the hallways. As we were ready to install it, the Covid19 Pandemic was declared. We are waiting to resume the plan at any given moment, because pandemic or not, the seniors did not disappear.

What is the Daily Dozen

It is a set of 12 illustrated posters printed on a letter size paper for convenience, captioned in both English and French. It can be installed on each floor of the building. Most housing and senior organizations have access to volunteers to help with installation.

The Daily Dozen is available in PDF and print formats as posters and a book. The book have additional content.

- **Which is better, PDF or print?**

When you have a PDF you can print as many copies as you need to accommodate the whole organization whereas printed copies are ready to use but limited in quantity.

- **How to install the Daily Dozen:**

The most affordable is a simple lamination and double tape for sticking to the wall but you can use plastic covers or picture frames.

- **What are the benefits?**

Seniors are healthier, happier, more independent people. When we take care of our seniors, the whole community is better off. Can you imagine seeing someone walking down the hallway stopping every few meters to make a move? Automatically it will make you move too and smile to yourself.

Summary

- There is a problem of social isolation and physical inactivity among seniors.
- We can provide a simple and affordable solution by installing a visual exercise guide in the hallways.
- The whole community benefits when our seniors are healthier and more independent.

My vision for Daily Dozen is simple:

To install the Daily Dozen in as many senior residences and apartment buildings as possible.

I am asking you to look into your contact list and see who do you know that can help reduce the social isolation and physical inactivity among seniors with the Daily Dozen?

- Printed book available on Amazon: [Daily Dozen: Visual Exercise Guide—for Seniors 65+](#)

Example used

- [Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines](#) for Older Adults – 65 Years & Older
- [CSEPguidelines.ca](#)



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