



# Helping women and girls get active

*This Girl Can – Victoria*

In 2015, Sport England launched a game-changing campaign to empower women to become more physically active – regardless of their ability or body shape. So far, it has inspired a massive 3.9 million women to try (or get back into) fitness and sport.

After seeing the success of that campaign, VicHealth was determined to do the same for the women of Victoria. That's why in March 2018 VicHealth launched the This Girl Can – Victoria campaign: a mass media, large-scale investment to smash the barriers (real or perceived) that stop women and girls in our community from getting involved.

It's a celebration of women doing their thing and being active – no matter how they look, how good they are, or how sweaty they get. This Girl Can – Victoria supports gender equality by challenging traditional gender roles (sporty and active as male traits) and by celebrating women who are fit and strong.

We've put together this practical guide to give you advice, suggestions, hints and tips to help more women and girls in your local area to get active.

**62%** of women in Victoria say they want to become more physically active. So let's help them.

VicHealth 2017. VicHealth physical activity across lifestages- Adult (25+) with no children. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

**#ThisGirlCanVIC**  
**thisgirlcan.com.au**

## Who is this guide for?

This guide is for you if you're part of any activity, club or industry body that could be getting more women involved in getting active.

You may be from a sport and recreation facility, gym, swim centre, sporting club, school or university, local council, group fitness provider or private provider.

## We're glad you're with us on this

It's time to start thinking about your club, activity or program and how you appear to women who are keen to get more physically active. We've asked women who are less active what would make a difference to them, and we've learnt from Sport England's experience. So in this guide you'll find practical ideas for small, low-cost changes you can make to your programs or club to help women have a positive experience when getting into, or returning to, exercise.

Feel free to use as much or as little of the information from this guide as you like. Even two or three small changes can make a big difference. And with the demand created by VicHealth's statewide *This Girl Can – Victoria* campaign, we're expecting lots of women in your area to try a new activity like yours... so now's the time to get ready.

Take some time to think about what changes will have the most impact in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for women – particularly those who haven't exercised in a while, or who haven't tried your club, facility or activity before.

The most important thing to know is that for a lot of less active women, it's a *lack of confidence and fear of judgement* that's been stopping them from getting involved in physical activity. What can you do to break down these barriers? That's the purpose of this guide – to help you help them.

# LOOKING THROUGH THEIR EYES...

When designing programs for inactive women and girls, it helps to 'look through their eyes' to understand why they haven't been involved before, and overcome those barriers together. Here are *four strategies* that can have a big impact on participation for women, and some ways you can start – or keep doing – each one. You'll be able to introduce most of these quickly, easily and with little cost.

## 1 GET THEIR ATTENTION

- Use photos that show everyday women of all shapes, sizes, backgrounds and abilities getting involved
- Tailor your messages to be encouraging and positive
- Get the word out in your local community – word of mouth and social media often work well
- Partner with other organisations to engage with and reach new people

## 3 BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

- As always, say hello, use eye contact and learn people's names
- Chat about what to expect – and encourage people to ask as many questions as they need
- Make a welcome offer/promotion for new members
- Offer mentors or buddies to make getting started as easy as possible
- Encourage everyone to support newcomers
- Reassure newcomers, be friendly and invite them back

## 2 TAILOR YOUR OFFERING

- Ask women what they want when designing programs
- Introduce a low-commitment way to join or try your activity
- Encourage friends to come along
- Try shorter session times or game lengths
- Check that your timetabling suits the women in your community
- Make smaller groups with more personal support and advice from the instructor
- Try to use less intimidating or complex equipment
- For sport clubs, consider volunteer roles for those who aren't quite ready to join in yet

## 4 PREPARE YOUR PEOPLE

- Show empathy and be encouraging
- Discuss challenges and fears openly
- Help women prevent injury
- Speak in a way that connects with people
- Adjust activities to suit all abilities
- Offer paired activities where possible
- Provide activities that allow for skill progression
- Reward achievements, even the small ones
- Encourage social activities outside of sessions
- Seek regular feedback

# About *This Girl Can - Victoria*

## Here's what we know about women and physical activity:

- Nearly half of Victorian women aged 25 and over feel intimidated by gyms, and two in five women feel embarrassed exercising in public.
- Nearly half of all Victorian women aged 25 and over believe that sporting clubs are intimidating. And around one in three believes that sporting clubs are not welcoming to people like them.

Research has told us that women have a fear of judgement that stops them from feeling comfortable with physical activity. *This Girl Can - Victoria* addresses this by representing a range of everyday women being physically active, including all ages, levels of ability, background, body shape and size.

VicHealth 2017, VicHealth physical activity across lifestages- Adult (25+) with no children. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

## Ready to help us change this?

*This Girl Can - Victoria* is about encouraging women to get active - no matter how well they do it, how they look or even how red their face gets. The campaign aims to inspire women to take up a range of activities throughout the state.

We have received an overwhelmingly positive response from Victorian women since we launched the campaign in March 2018. Members of the general community and organisations like yours have already let us know how much they love our own local spin on the original Sport England campaign.

*This Girl Can - Victoria* is backed by a significant media campaign - creating increased demand from women looking to get involved in all types of physical activity. This increased interest has come from a range of women, including new and beginner participants, returned participants, and some existing participants stepping it up a notch.

WE'RE HERE  
TO HELP YOU  
GET READY.



# Looking for more resources?

The info you've read so far can make a significant difference in women and girls' experiences in getting and staying active with just a few 'quick wins' – but it's by no means exhaustive. Check out some of these other resources.

## Change Our Game

Following the Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation, this website from Sport and Recreation Victoria showcases best-practice promotion and development of female sport in Victoria. This includes stories of change, role models, case studies and links to major media stories.

## Physical Activity Across Life Stages

This research explores the attitudes and barriers to physical activity for Victorians at key life stages, and considers what would motivate them to change their existing behaviours. Want to get to know and understand the inactive female audience? Start here.

## Female Participation in Sport and Physical Activity

Further insights into the trends in activity levels for Victorian women, health benefits of physical activity for women, motivations for females to get active and physical activity across life stages.

## Female Friendly Sport Infrastructure Guidelines

Developed by Sport and Recreation Victoria, these guidelines provide information and advice on how to deliver more gender-equitable facilities.

## Vicsport – Welcoming Sport

Outlines how sporting organisations can become more inclusive. It includes practical actions, resources (fact sheets, templates, guidelines, websites) and best-practice examples in the areas of leadership, policies and practices, facilities and access, participation – and maintaining your changes in the long-term.

## Clearinghouse for Sport – Women's Sport

Provides an extensive range of links, research articles and case studies related to the topic of women's sport.

## Sportsview

Sign up to Vicsport's fortnightly newsletter to receive information and updates from across the sport industry.

## Active Moreland Women and Girls

A great example of council-led information, including fact sheets, checklists and other information developed by the council to support inclusion of women and girls in sport and physical activity.

**Have some great tips or resources you'd like to share?**

**Get in touch with our team:  
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