

Hesse's Ministry for Social Affairs publishes guidelines for setting up fitness trails

playfit® fitness trails made subject of an academic study in the state of Hesse

Life expectancy in Germany is increasing. In 2030, one in three Germans will be over 60 years old. At the same time, the percentage of inactive people over 18 is also rising. Physical activity, however, improves quality of life and can reduce the risk of many diseases. With older people in particular, skills and abilities relevant for their daily life can be improved through exercise while their susceptibility to falls and injuries reduced.

In summer 2011 the Hesse regional government carried out an academic study about a playfit® fitness trail in the *Schlossgarten* in Hanau. This was in collaboration with the three universities *JWG Universität Frankfurt*, *Hochschule Darmstadt* and *Hochschule RheinMain* and jointly with the *Landessportbund Hessen e.V.* [Hesse Regional Sport Federation]. Fifty-eight volunteers aged between 65 and 91 used the playfit® equipment regularly over a period of three months. The senior citizens met three times a week for a group practice session under the supervision of a qualified trainer. The results obtained by the universities concerning the physical benefit are extremely positive. They show a significant increase in physical abilities, particular in relation to leg strength, walking speed and balance. A further study concerning the social and psychological effects of the fitness trail reveals what is most definitely a positive change in the perceived quality of life of the test subjects. This manifests itself in increased vitality, ability to interact socially, emotional health and mental well-being. By way of illustration, some of the volunteers compared the fitness trail to a village-green where "nice, friendly people can always meet and get to know each other informally. This confirms and emphasises the value and benefit of playfit® fitness trails in regard to the participants' perception of quality of life.

In the guidelines "Exercise for Health in Old Age" you can find the results of the academic studies and information and advice about the setting up of fitness trails can be found in the guidelines "Exercise for Health in Old Age" you can find. The guidelines are obtainable free of charge from the Hesse Ministry for Social Affairs or at www.playfit.de.

