

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 on the up. An adequate amount of physical activity, however, improves quality of life and reduces the risk of many diseases. With older people in particular, skills and abilities relevant for their daily life are improved through exercise, while their susceptibility to falls and injuries is also reduced.

In summer 2011 the Hesse regional government carried out an academic study about a playfit® fitness trail in the Hanau Schloßgarten [palace garden]. This was in collaboration with the three universities *JWG Universität Frankfurt*, *Hochschule Darmstadt* and *Hochschule RheinMain* and also with the *Landessportbund Hessen e.V.* [Hesse Regional Sport Federation]. 58 test subjects aged between 65 and 91 tested the playfit® equipment over a period of three months. The senior citizens met three times a week for a group practice session where they received guidance from a sports expert.

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, test subjects described a fitness trail as a "village pump" where "nice, friendly people can always meet and get to know each other without any great song and dance".

This confirms and emphasises the value and benefit of playfit® fitness trails when it comes to the participants' quality of life.

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

