



Exercise for Seniors

Staying Youthful

By Jean Jeffers

Are you a senior who wants to look and feel younger? Exercise is the key to healthy aging, vitality, and staying young longer.

As seniors get older, the challenge is greater to start/maintain an exercise program. While many have exercise as an activity, when illness or health problems arise, they may be discouraged or quit altogether. Some seniors think they are too old or too fragile for exercise. Others are afraid of injury or falls.

There are many benefits to a regular exercise program:

1. Exercise helps older adults maintain/lose weight.
2. Exercise reduces the effects of illness and chronic disease. There is improved immune function, better heart health and blood pressure, better bone density, better digestive function, and for those who exercise regularly, there is a lowered risk of several chronic conditions including Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, arthritis, obesity, heart disease, and colon cancer among others.

3. Exercise boosts motivation, mood and memory. Exercise lessens cognitive decline.

The benefits of exercise for the aged may be truly life changing. Even a small amount of increased physical activity may prove important for maintaining physical function, mental health and helping socialize with friends. It may also help prevent injury and falls. Being healthy and active allows you to live longer. Exercise improves the quality of life no matter the age.

Senior health experts maintain that a sedentary lifestyle may rob seniors of much of their health and enjoyment of life. It is never too late to begin to exercise. Walking is a great type of exercise for seniors. For those who have been inactive for years, or perhaps decades, the benefits of walking for the older individual are numerous, and with time may create a situation where seniors begin to regain their health and zest. Get physical, define where you will walk and let others know, get comfortable walking shoes, start out slow and build up over time, set a reasonable goal to start the process, and then

increase the length and intensity of the walk with each workout. Before long, you will be going the distance!!!

The following are health tips for seniors who want to begin an exercise program:

1. Get medical approval beforehand.
2. Pay attention to your body. You should know you are working a bit, but it shouldn't feel extremely hard.
3. Warm up before and cool down afterward.
4. Use the proper equipment such as a bicycle helmet or proper running shoes, dress appropriately.
5. Recognize problems. Exercise should never hurt or make you feel too tired. If you feel dizzy or short of breath, develop chest pain, break out in a cold sweat, or experience pain, stop immediately and call your doctor or go to the emergency room.

To get all the benefits of physical activity, try the four types of exercise:

1. Endurance: try to build up to at least 30 minutes of activity that makes you breathe hard on most or all days of the week.
2. Strength: Strength exercise with weights builds muscles. When you have strong muscles, you can get up and sit down easily, pick up your grandchildren, and walk to go shopping.

3. Balance: Try to stand on one foot then the other without holding on to anything.

4. Flexibility: Stretch when muscles are warmed up. Don't stretch too far it hurts.

No matter your age or current physical condition, you could benefit from exercise. It is not about strenuous workouts but about adequate movement and activity to your life. Exercise is the key to staying strong, energetic, and healthy as you get older. For those who have an exercise program in place, keep up the good work, set higher goals, and enjoy the process!

About the Author

Jean is a RN and a writer. She is a staff writer for Living Well 50Plus a Health & Wellness Magazine, has been seen in Diabetes Health and Infinity Magazines, and is currently publishing in Christian Living in the Mature Years. She resides in Cincinnati.