

Exercise



Health experts are constantly conducting research in order to learn more about the benefits of exercise for the elderly. Studies have shown that sedentary adults are more likely to suffer from heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, certain cancers, and joint and muscle disorders. To help ward off these conditions and to deal with the everyday wear and tear that aging has on our bodies, we offer the information below.

Physical Activity is Essential to Healthy Aging

As an older adult, regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. It can prevent many of the health problems that seem to come with age. It also helps your muscles grow stronger so you can keep doing your day-to-day activities without becoming dependent on others.

Not doing any physical activity can be bad for you, no matter your age or health condition. Keep in mind, some physical activity is better than none at all. Your health benefits will also increase with the more physical activity that you do.

If you're 65 years of age or older, are generally fit, and have no limiting health conditions you can follow the guidelines listed below.

For Important Health Benefits Older adults need at least:

2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., brisk walking) every week **and** muscle-strengthening activities on two or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).

OR

1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., jogging or running) every week **and** muscle-strengthening activities on two or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).

OR

An equivalent mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity **and** muscle-strengthening activities on two or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).

10 minutes at a time is fine

We know 150 minutes each week sounds like a lot of time, but it's not. That's 2 hours and 30 minutes, about the same amount of time you might spend watching a movie. The good news is that you can spread your activity out during the week, so you don't have to do it all at once. You can even break it up into smaller chunks of time during the day. It's about what works best for you, as long as you're doing physical activity at a moderate or vigorous effort for at least 10 minutes at a time.

For Even Greater Health Benefits Older adults should increase their activity to:

5 hours (300 minutes) each week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity **and** muscle-strengthening activities on two or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).

OR

2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) each week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity **and** muscle-strengthening activities on two or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).

OR

An equivalent mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity **and** muscle-strengthening activities on two or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).

Aerobic activity – what counts?

Aerobic activity or “cardio” gets you breathing harder and your heart beating faster. From pushing a lawn mower, to taking a dance class, to biking to the store – all types of

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activities count. As long as you're doing them at a moderate or vigorous intensity for **at least 10 minutes at a time**. Even something as simple as walking is a great way to get the aerobic activity you need, as long as it's at a moderately intense pace.

***Intensity** is how hard your body is working during aerobic activity.*

How do you know if you're doing moderate or vigorous aerobic activity?

On a 10-point scale, where sitting is 0 and working as hard as you can is 10, **moderate-intensity aerobic activity is a 5 or 6**. It will make you breathe harder and your heart beat faster. You'll also notice that you'll be able to talk, but not sing the words to your favorite song.

Vigorous-intensity activity is a 7 or 8 on this scale. Your heart rate will increase quite a bit and you'll be breathing hard enough so that you won't be able to say more than a few words without stopping to catch your breath.

You can do moderate- or vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or a mix of the two each week. Intensity is how hard your body is working during aerobic activity. A rule of thumb is that **1 minute of vigorous-intensity activity is about the same as 2 minutes of moderate-intensity activity**.

Everyone's fitness level is different. This means that walking may feel like a moderately intense activity to you, but for others, it may feel vigorous. It all depends on you – the shape you're in, what you feel comfortable doing, and

your health condition. What's important is that you do physical activities that are right for you and your abilities.

Muscle-strengthening activities – what counts?

Besides aerobic activity, you need to do things to make your muscles stronger at least two days a week. These types of activities will help keep you from losing muscle as you get older.

To gain health benefits, muscle-strengthening activities need to be done to the point where it's hard for you to do another repetition without help. A **repetition** is one complete movement of an activity, like lifting a weight or doing one sit-up. Try to do 8–12 repetitions per activity that count as 1 **set**. Try to do at least 1 set of muscle-strengthening activities, but to gain even more benefits, do 2 or 3 sets.

There are many ways you can strengthen your muscles, whether it's at home or the gym. The activities you choose should work all the major muscle groups of your body (legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms). You may want to try:

- Lifting weights
- Working with resistance bands
- Doing exercises that use your body weight for resistance (push-ups, sit-ups)
- Heavy gardening (digging, shoveling)
- Yoga



Reprinted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Aerobic Exercise Important Therapy for Preventing, Slowing Down Dementia

Any exercise that gets the heart pumping may reduce the risk of dementia and slow the condition's progression once it starts, reported a Mayo Clinic study published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*.

Researchers examined the role of aerobic exercise in preserving cognitive abilities and concluded that it should not be overlooked as an important therapy against dementia.

The researchers broadly defined exercise as enough aerobic physical activity to raise the heart rate and increase the body's need for oxygen. Examples include walking, gym workouts and activities at home such as shoveling snow or raking leaves.

"We culled through all the scientific literature we could find on the subject of exercise and cognition, including animal studies and observational studies, reviewing over 1,600 papers, with 130 bearing directly on this issue. We attempted to put together a balanced view of the subject," says J. Eric Ahlskog, M.D., Ph.D., a neurologist at Mayo Clinic.

"We concluded that you can make a very compelling argument for exercise as a disease-modifying strategy to prevent dementia and mild cognitive impairment, and for favorably modifying these processes once they have developed."

The researchers note that brain imaging studies have consistently revealed objective evidence of favorable effects of exercise on human brain integrity. Also, they note, animal research has shown that exercise generates trophic factors that improve brain functioning, plus exercise facilitates brain connections (neuroplasticity).

More research is needed on the relationship between exercise and cognitive function, the study's authors say, but they encourage exercise, in general, especially for those with or worried about cognitive issues.

"Whether addressing our patients in primary care or neurology clinics, we should continue to encourage exercise for not only general health, but also cognitive health," Dr. Ahlskog says.

By Mayo Clinic Proceedings. Mayo Clinic is a nonprofit worldwide leader in medical care, research and education for people from all walks of life. For more information, visit www.mayoclinic.com.

Exercise & Seniors

Is it safe for me to exercise?

It is safe for most adults older than 65 years of age to exercise. Even patients who have chronic illnesses such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and arthritis can exercise safely. Many of these conditions are improved with exercise. If you are not sure if exercise is safe for you or if you are currently inactive, ask your doctor.

How do I get started?

It is important to wear loose, comfortable clothing and well-fitting, sturdy shoes. Your shoes should have a good arch support, and an elevated and cushioned heel to absorb shock.

If you are not already active, begin slowly. Start with exercises that you are already comfortable doing. Starting slowly makes it less likely that you will injure yourself. Starting slowly also helps prevent soreness. The saying "no pain, no gain" is not true for older or elderly adults. You do not have to exercise at a high intensity to get most health benefits.

For example, walking is an excellent activity to start with. As you become used to exercising, or if you are already active, you can slowly increase the intensity of your exercise program.

What type of exercise should I do?

There are several types of exercise that you should do. You will want to do some type of aerobic activity for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. Examples are walking, swimming and bicycling. You should also do resistance (also called strength training) 2 days per week.

Warm up for 5 minutes before each exercise session. Walking slowly and then stretching are good warm-up activities. You should also cool down with more stretching for 5 minutes when you finish exercising. Cool down longer in warmer weather.

Exercise is only good for you if you are feeling well. Wait to exercise until you feel better if you have a cold, the flu or another illness. If you miss exercise for more than 2 weeks, be sure to start slowly again.

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When should I call my doctor?

If your muscles or joints are sore the day after exercising, you may have done too much. Next time, exercise at a lower intensity. If the pain or discomfort persists, you should talk to your doctor. You should also talk to your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms while exercising:

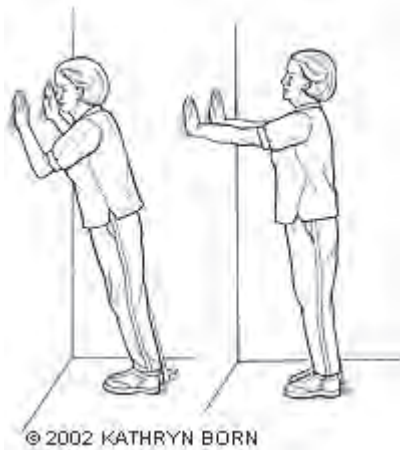
- Chest pain or pressure
- Trouble breathing or excessive shortness of breath
- Light-headedness or dizziness
- Difficulty with balance
- Nausea

What are some specific exercises I can do?

Below are some simple strength exercises that you can do at home. Each exercise should be done 8 to 10 times for 2 sets. Remember to:

- Complete all movements in a slow, controlled fashion.
- Don't hold your breath.
- Stop if you feel pain.
- Stretch each muscle after your workout.

PICTURE 1. Wall push-ups.



- A. Place hands flat against the wall.
- B. Slowly lower body to the wall. Push body away from wall to return to starting position.

PICTURE 2. Chair squats.



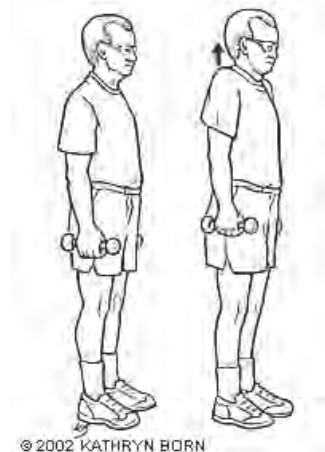
Begin by sitting in the chair. Lean slightly forward and stand up from the chair. Try not to favor one side or use your hands to help you.

PICTURE 3. Bicep curls.



Hold a weight in each hand with your arms at your sides. Bending your arms at the elbows, lift the weights to your shoulders and then lower them to your sides.

PICTURE 4. Shoulder shrugs.



Hold a weight in each hand with your arms at your side. Shrug your shoulders up toward your ears and then lower them back down.