

SENIORS & EXERCISE – UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things older adults can do for their health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), regular physical activity can prevent many of the health problems that may come with age¹, including obesity, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, premature mortality, and other serious health conditions.

At CareFocus Companion Services, we care about the health and safety of you and your loved ones. We also understand the confusion and concerns that can come along with beginning a new exercise program. Use this list of frequently asked questions as a starting point when discussing with your physician how you can incorporate regular physical activity into your life.



1. Why is physical activity so important?

Regular exercise and physical activity are important to the physical and mental health of almost everyone, including older adults. Being physically active can help you continue to do the things you enjoy and stay independent as you age. Regular physical activity over long periods of time can produce long-term health benefits.²

2. What's the difference between physical activity and exercise?

Both exercise and physical activity refer to voluntary movements that burn calories. Physical activities get your body moving and include such activities as gardening, walking the dog, and raking leaves. Exercise is a form of physical activity that is specifically planned, structured, and repetitive.²

3. What is cardio endurance exercise and why is it important to me?

Cardio endurance exercise, sometimes called cardio, endurance, or aerobic training, uses large muscle groups in rhythmic motions over a period of time. Endurance training increases your body's ability to deliver oxygen and nutrients throughout your body. Cardio exercise can help you lessen fatigue and shortness of breath. Cardio exercises can also promote independence by improving your endurance for daily activities such as walking, house cleaning, and running errands.²

4. What is strength training and why is it important to me?

Strength training, or weight training, is a repetitive motion using weights or external resistance from your body weight, machines, or elastic bands to build muscles in your body. Strength training helps improve balance, build muscle, and prevent loss of bone mass. Strength training exercises will help you stay independent and help make day-to-day activities easier, such as opening a jar, getting in and out of a car, and lifting objects.²

5. What is balance training and why is it important to me?

Balance training helps you maintain stability under various conditions. Balance training can improve your overall balance, posture, and quality of walking. Good balance can also reduce your risk of falling.

6. What is flexibility training and why is it important to me?

Flexibility training, sometimes called stretching, challenges your joints' ability to move freely through a full range of motion. Flexibility training helps your body stay limber and increases your range of movement for everyday activities such as tying your shoes, washing your hair, and playing with your grandchildren or pets.²

7. How many times a week should I exercise?

There is no set amount of times per week someone is supposed to be physically active, but many studies show that it is better to spread your activity out over the course of a week and to be active at least three days a week.³



This information is not meant as a substitute for professional medical or nutritional advice and consultation. When differences exist between the information here and information given to you by your healthcare provider(s), you should follow the advice of your healthcare provider(s). Any additional information or clarification needed should be sought from the Physician, Practitioner, Speech Pathologist, or Nutritionist who is familiar with the individual's health and medical conditions.

SENIORS & EXERCISE HOW TO GET STARTED

Regular exercise helps seniors maintain health, boost energy, and improve confidence. Whether you are generally healthy or are managing an illness, there are large and small ways to become more active.⁴ Use the lists below to help you incorporate physical activities into your everyday life and begin your journey to a healthier lifestyle.



Keep in Mind⁵:

- ▶ **Activity that requires moderate effort is safe for most people, but it is always important to consult with your doctor about the types and amounts of physical activity that are right for you. This is especially important if you have a health condition such as heart disease, arthritis, or diabetes.**
- ▶ **Variety is the spice of life. Doing a variety of activities can make physical activity more enjoyable and also reduce your risk of injury.**
- ▶ **Even if you have problems doing normal daily activities, such as climbing stairs or walking you can still incorporate safe and beneficial regular physical activity into your life.**
- ▶ **If you have to take a break from your regular workout routine due to an illness such as the flu, be sure that when you start again it is at a lower level and slowly work your back up to your usual level of activity.**

Get Moving⁶:

- ▶ **Weight-bearing, low-impact exercises:**
 - Elliptical training machines
 - Low impact aerobics
 - Stair-step machines
 - Walking (treadmill/outside)
- ▶ **Muscle-strengthening exercises:**
 - Functional movements, such as standing and rising up on your toes
 - Lifting weights
 - Using elastic exercise bands
 - Using weight machines
 - Lifting your own body weight
- ▶ **Non-impact activities:**
 - Balance exercises, such as tai chi
 - Posture exercises, such as yoga
 - Functional exercises, such as standing up and sitting down until you are tired
- ▶ **Non-weight-bearing, non-impact activities:**
 - Bicycling/indoor cycling
 - Deep-water walking
 - Stretching and flexibility exercises
 - Swimming
 - Water aerobics

¹“2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Fact Sheet for Health Professionals on Physical Activity Guidelines for Older Adults.” CDC.gov. June 2009 <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/pdf/PA_Fact_Sheet_OlderAdults.pdf>

²“Exercise & Physical Activity: Your Everyday Guide from the National Institute on Aging.” NIA.NIH.gov. 11 Nov. 2009 <<http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/ExerciseGuide/>>

³“Be Active Your Way: A Fact Sheet for Adults.” Health.gov. 17 Oct. 2008 <<http://www.health.gov/PAGuidelines/factSheetAdults.aspx>>

⁴“Exercise for Seniors.” NLM.NIH.gov. 28 Jan. 2010 <<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/exerciseforseniors.html>>

⁵“Making Physical Activity a Part of an Older Adult’s Life.” CDC.gov. May 2010 <<http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/getactive/olderadults.html>>

⁶“Prevention Exercise for Healthy Bones.” NOF.gov. 2008. <<http://www.nof.org/prevention/exercise.htm>>

For more information or to discuss recommendations on healthy eating and necessary care for your loved one, contact CareFocus Companion Services today!

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