

# Being Active as We Get Older

Exercise  
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AMERICAN COLLEGE  
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Our golden years can be powerful years. The older you are, the more you can benefit from physical activity. Experts now say that any physical activity counts toward better health – even just a few minutes!

Being active will help you feel better, move better and sleep better. It's never too late to start. Stamina, strength, balance and flexibility can be improved into the 80s, 90s and beyond.

Regular physical activity:

- Reduces your risk of falling or having a fall-related injury
- Helps you stay independent
- Keeps your brain healthy by reducing your risk of developing dementia/Alzheimer's and helps improve your thinking
- Lowers your risk of developing new chronic health problems (such as diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease) and reduces their risk of getting worse; and
- Decreases your risk of getting several types of cancer and helps prevent them from coming back.

## Getting Started

### Keep It Simple

Sit less and move around more! Walk to the mailbox. Walk the dog. Dance in the kitchen. Take the stairs. Find opportunities to move throughout your day. It all adds up!



### Be Active with a Friend

Find an exercise buddy and get active together. Your partner could be a family member, neighbor or a friend at the senior center. You'll keep each other going.



### Check Your Health

If you have health worries, talk with your health care provider before beginning a new activity routine. Muscle or joint problems? Ask about physical therapy. You'll learn specific exercises to strengthen and protect trouble areas.



### Find Your Fun

Choose activities you enjoy because you'll be more likely to stick with it. Go easy at first. Walking, gardening, pickleball, sitting aerobics – everything helps in different ways!



Start where you are. **Use what you have. Do what you can.**

# Aerobic Activity



Aerobic activity improves your stamina and heart health. During aerobic activity your heart rate and breathing get faster. Build up to doing 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity activity, 75 minutes/week of vigorous activity or a combination of both.

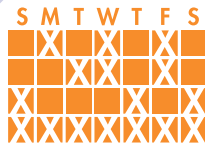
## What?

Any rhythmic, continuous activity



## How often?

3-5 days/week



## How hard?

Fairly light to somewhat hard or hard



## How much?

Start w/a few minutes. Gradually build up to 30-60 minutes over the day.



**Remember:** Walking, biking, dancing and water exercises are great. How about active yard work or house chores? Fit in 5 or 10 minutes here and there. Or go for 20-30 minutes. Be active however and wherever you can. Every minute adds up!

## To stay safe and injury free:

- Be as active as your abilities allow.
- Start slowly – with light to medium effort.
- Gradually increase your pace and time spent being active.
- Warm up gently and cool down at an easy pace before and after exercise.

# Strength Training



Strength training, for example, working with weights or resistance bands, makes you stronger and helps your overall health. Plus, strength training can make daily activities like lifting laundry baskets or yardwork easier and safer.

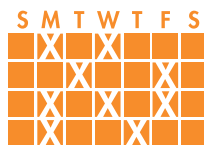
## What?

Hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines or your own body (for example, wall push-ups or chair sit-to-stands)



## How often?

2 or more days/week  
\*Rest day in between



## How hard?

Start with light effort. Build up to medium or hard effort.



## How much?

10-15 repetitions to start (for each major muscle group). Build up to 8-12 reps of challenging effort. Repeat 1-3 times.



**Remember:** Avoid straining or holding your breath when lifting. If you need it, get help from a certified exercise professional. They can teach you the right way to do exercises and how to breathe properly.

# Balance



Balance activities improve your ability to resist forces that could cause you to fall. They also lower your risk of injury if a fall does happen. Simply getting stronger will help too, especially in your legs, stomach and back. Train in an uncluttered area and use a chair or wall for support if needed. A certified exercise professional can guide you safely through balance training. Don't do these by yourself! Here are some examples:

## Standing stability

Gradually reduce your base of support. Hold each position for 15-30 seconds:

- Stand with both feet together and hands on your chest.
- Stand with one foot forward and the other back.
- Stand-heel-to-toe.
- Stand on one leg.

## Active challenges

Do movements that bother your center of gravity:

- Walk on a line.
- Walk heel-to-toe.
- Walk on your toes.
- Turn in a circle or move in different patterns.

# Other Types of Physical Activity



## Flexibility

Stretch your muscles 2 or more days/week to the point of feeling tightness. Hold each stretch for 30-60 seconds. For example, stretch your calves or the back of your thighs.



## Range of Motion

Gently move your joints through a full range of motion. Do 10 repetitions of activities such as knee slides, wrist and shoulder circles. Motion is lotion!



## Combo Activities

Do aerobic activity, strength training and balance exercises all in one session. Try things like yoga, Tai Chi and Pilates to help with balance, flexibility and strength!



## Take More Steps

Use a smart phone or activity tracker. Slowly build up to 2,000 more daily steps than you're doing now. Good job! Then aim for 7,000-9,000 steps/day.



## More Help

For additional information about being active go to [www.cdc.gov/features/activity-older-adults](http://www.cdc.gov/features/activity-older-adults)

Go to [www.acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro](http://www.acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro) to find **an ACSM certified exercise professional** near you.

How will I get started **this week?** \_\_\_\_\_