

## Maintain Good Health and Mobility By Keeping Fit in Your Elder Years

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One of the biggest setbacks when you're aging is the slow vanishing of your mobility. Joint pain and energy levels wane, and eventually, if you're not careful, you become sedentary and unable to participate in life at its fullest.

Some people accept this as a normal part of aging, but the reality is, it's not normal for any age – whether you're 1 or 100. You should always be able to maintain your mobility and good health, and contrary to popular belief, exercising as a senior is the way to give you *more* energy and an elevated level of independence.

Age is just a number, and many of us forget that and assume that because of how old we are, we're unable to exercise like anyone younger - too afraid that some sort of irreversible or serious injury will occur.

In fact, strength, cardiovascular and balance training can be very beneficial to the aging community because it has the ability to prolong life, prevent disease and injuries from even occurring.

Preventative and corrective exercise can not only reduce risk of injuries, but it's beneficial for bone density, stress, and posture as well, so it's important to shy away from your sedentary lifestyle and start moving no matter what your age!

### **It All Starts with Posture**

Some people mistakenly believe all they have to do is show up at a gym, start walking on a treadmill and they're on the right path. But when you're aging, you have to be careful that you take preventative measures to lay the right foundation for your fitness success.

The first step in beginning any exercise regimen is to be aware of your starting point - meaning you must first know how your kinetic chain works before you begin resistance training.

Your kinetic chain consists of major joint complexes that start at the ankles and go up to the thoracic spine. One imbalance can set off your entire kinetic chain, making it crucial to have a fitness professional or medical expert perform an assessment to see where you currently are.

This assessment could be one of many movements that will reveal to the expert which muscles are over or underactive. Knowing which muscle groups are overactive is beneficial to letting you know where to begin stretching.

Knowing which muscles are underactive will allow you to know where to begin strengthening. Depending on how far off your alignment is, this will determine how long it will take once you will begin working with a particular fitness regimen to correct your kinetic chain.

Some can correct their posture in a matter of weeks, while others may require a couple of months, but the results after working on your kinetic chain will be the same. Once your alignment has improved, you'll feel better.

You'll be able to have a better range of motion, feel fewer aches and pains, and be one step closer to preventing future injuries from exercise or daily life movements. Beginner yoga, in some cases, could be very beneficial to those who have very tight muscles such as rounded shoulders.

At the same time, this will work on stretching other muscle groups and building foundational core strength. Underactive muscles - such as when your knees are pulling toward each other during a squat assessment - could be corrected by leg strengthening exercises under supervision of a fitness professional.

While improving your kinetic chain, you may also want to incorporate a few balance exercises - such as single leg movements to reduce the risk of falling or tripping. Once you're fully aligned and moving much better, you'll be ready to slowly start incorporating more strength training and continue cardiovascular training to start working on your overall foundation.

## **Silver Gym Memberships**

Most gyms will offer a senior discount for those who are of the right age, which is more of a reason to look into becoming a member of your local gym. Gyms can be very beneficial - especially to anyone who requires exercise modifications because of the wide variety of amenities that gyms usually offer.

Most big-name gyms will offer many various types of exercise equipment, senior classes, yoga, and they usually have an indoor or outdoor swimming pool. Machines at the gym, while not as beneficial for functional movement, can be incorporated into your exercise routine because they allow you to build strength without most of the risks that come with free-weights.

If you have a big-name gym in your area, there's also a good chance that they offer senior fitness classes to help build a stronger and more stable foundation. Personal trainers at the gym will also be beneficial - despite your budget.

The knowledge gained for proper technique and injury prevention will be very beneficial. Trainers, at times, can vary on cost from gym to gym, but the trick is knowing your budget.

Let them know what that number is and they can tell you if you can afford a whole program, or if it's possible to purchase a couple of sessions until you learn the technique.

Working out at the pool is a great way to build strength using water weights, while training in a low impact environment. Many older people build up their cardiovascular and strength abilities in the water until they feel as though they have enough of a foundation to venture to the weight room and begin load training.

Check and see if any of the fitness clubs in your area offer free yoga classes as well. Yoga can be a great tool to de-stress, which is important as we age – as well as stretch overtight muscles, and build a solid core.

Machines in the fitness facilities are great to use in the sense that they prevent a lot of common injuries usually associated with free weights. It's still a great idea to

ask for an equipment orientation from a professional in order to get more familiar with the equipment.

There are many exercises and resources to help you get a good workout and program in your own home, but having that gym membership will remove any limitations in your workouts that are often seen with home workouts such as a lack of access to certain equipment, classes and professionals.

### **Benefits of Senior Strength Training**

As we begin to age, our bone density decreases, putting us at risk for osteoporosis and becoming prone to breaking bones. Luckily, to prevent this, a healthy strength training regimen can be done to ensure you retain your muscle mass.

Before beginning any strength training program, it's beneficial to have a professional perform a posture assessment to observe your kinetic chain. The kinetic chain must be in alignment before performing heavier lifts, so depending on which muscles are over or underactive, it can determine where you should begin structuring a strength training program.

Once you've built a foundational cardiovascular and strength level, you can begin to train more for strength and muscle hypertrophy. A great way to build a solid foundation is to begin with assisted or modified exercises to prevent injury, lower impact, and learn the movement properly to better prepare for the traditional lift.

Building strength in the pool is also a great method of boosting cardiovascular health, lowering impact, and still work the entire body. A good rule of thumb when beginning to work out after building a solid foundation and aligning your kinetic chain is to start with a weight that you know you can lift with excellent form.

A common reason for injuries with heavier weights is when someone is not aware of whether or not they can actually lift a weight with good form in the first place. Play it safe and pick up a slightly smaller weight, and perhaps throw in a couple of extra repetitions to add on to your warm up.

This will give you a better concept of a slightly heavier weight that you can still lift, without underestimating a much heavier weight that could possibly damage any joints or ligaments.

Keeping repetitions within eight to fifteen with three sets per movement should be an excellent starting point, and make sure you keep the workout within an hour or less. These variables will allow your body to gain strength and muscle growth without causing extra stress on the body.

Tracking the weights that you use, and being mindful to give each muscle group at least 24 hours of rest between workouts will ensure a much better recovery and muscle growth.

Before and after every workout make sure that you are both warming up and cooling down. Warmups and cool downs will give you a better workout beforehand, and a better recovery afterwards.

Common warm ups include dynamic movements and cardio to boost body temperature and flexibility, while stretching afterwards during the cool down to help soothe muscles and better protein synthesis of the muscle.

This warm up and cool down routine will help ensure you're not feeling crippled as if you've overdone it whenever you head to the gym for a workout. You'll leave and spend the next hours and days feeling limber and better than you did before.

### **Senior Fitness Injury Prevention**

The biggest benefits of exercise and fitness for seniors is that it improves preventative care from possible injuries and medical conditions. It's important to reduce the risk of injury from improper exercise with preparation.

Before even starting to exercise, you must consider a couple of important factors to optimize your safety and your workout. Consider your surroundings. If indoors, make sure that you have plenty of space for your movements.

If training outdoors, it's necessary to dress appropriately to prevent conditions such as overheating or hypothermia in colder conditions. Even designated

workout locations - such as a gym - can have its own fair share of hazards such as spilled liquids, dumbbells and plates laying on the floor.

It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of beginning a fitness journey, but it's crucial not to overlook the little things that can have major consequences. When using heavy weights, be sure to have workout accessories such as a weight belt for back support, gloves to prevent blisters, and a water bottle to replenish fluid loss.

Always know where the nearest AED kit is, and if you are concerned about any special conditions, some gyms even have emergency contact buttons to keep on your person. Working out with a buddy or spouse not only gets someone other than yourself moving, but they can be a support system if they're needed to motivate you or assist you during your routine.

Cooling down and stretching properly before and after workouts have also been proven to reduce the risk of injury, and boot recovery speed as well. Regardless of your style of workouts, make sure that no matter what the situation is, you have done everything you can to prevent any harm to yourself or others.

An injury can take weeks if not months to recover from, even longer as you grow older, creating a huge set back and making it difficult to start back up again. Never let age be a factor in whether or not you start exercising.

There are many senior athletes who have greatly improved their quality of life by staying active. If for any reason you have second thoughts, are afraid of injury, or unsure of where to start, it all begins with preparation.

Knowing what to wear, where to start with posture, seeking professional advice, and being aware of your surroundings are all factors that you or anyone at any age needs to consider as they begin an exercise regimen.

Carefully planning out these considerations will set yourself up for success and allow you to live a healthy lifestyle out of harm's way. Soon, by executing your program correctly, you will be feeling better, moving better, and realize how much more your quality of life has improved through consistency and determination.

Some people who are aging bemoan the fact that their energy levels have become depleted and their mobility is nowhere near as good as it used to be. But the best cure for these ailments is to face it head on and train your body to step up for you, not let it break down because you've let it grow stagnant.

Get help and educate yourself before stepping foot in the gym. Set some goals that assist you in whatever it is you hope to accomplish. If your age has been a factor in developing a disease, such as diabetes, work on reducing fat stores.

If you've discovered that in your older years, climbing a flight of stairs is hard to do, then focus on cardiovascular efforts as well as strength training. Never let age be a contributor to your fear of getting out there and getting fit!



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