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## Seniors & Physical Activity/Exercise

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### Abstract

There are numerous benefits of exercises for people of all ages, including a healthier heart, stronger bones and improved flexibility. And to go further for seniors, there are additional benefits, like reduction of the risk of chronic diseases, lowers the chance of injury and can even improve One's mood. Scientists have found that brain neurons- the special cells that perform all the necessary function to keep you alive, as well as help you think and improve your memory- all increase after a few weeks of regular exercise. As we age, our muscle mass begins to decrease. When we enter our forties, we lose 3-5% of muscle mass with each subsequent decade of life. Muscle is an essential contributor to our balance and bone strength; it keeps us strong. Without a proper muscular system our mobility and independence become compromised. Our daily movements gets crippled leading to inactivity and which has a disastrous effect on the health of an aged individual.

**Keywords:** Seniors, Physical Activity, Exercise

### Introduction

One of the best things we can do for your health is deciding to become physically active. The modes for becoming active are primarily Exercise and physical activity. These not only are great for our physical health but also mental health as well. Aging is a truth and its normal and true that as we age we do not have the stamina and agility we enjoyed in our younger years. But getting older doesn't mean we need to stop enjoying life sitting in a couch or laying on a bed all day.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), all older adults—both men and women—can benefit from regular, moderate physical activity. This is true even for people with medical conditions such as arthritis, heart disease, obesity, and high blood pressure.

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This article has been written keeping in mind such senior individuals who do not take up physical activity for whatever reasons of theirs. Hence this article shall dive into the amount of physical activity to be done by seniors, benefits of exercise and physical activity ( both physical and mental), types of activity possible, points to be kept in mind while doing physical activity, diet and others.

### How Much of Physical Activity is Advised

According to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans a senior individual should do at least 150 minutes (2 ½ hours) a week which includes moderate-intensity aerobic exercise, like brisk walking or fast dancing. Being active at least 3 days a week is best, but doing anything is

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better than doing nothing at all.

If any individuals have a history of health conditions like arthritis, diabetes or heart diseases they should be consulting a doctor before starting the exercise regime.

### What Exercises Are Best For Seniors?

Ideally, exercise regime for older adults should include a mix of aerobic exercise, strength/resistance training, balance and stretching/flexibility exercises. Trendy Fitness programs and high-intensity regimens aren't practical, or safe for most of the adults. Given below are some activities that can be done which shall cater to good and overall health and fitness.

**Balance-** Improves balance, posture, and the quality of your walking. It also reduces the risk of falling or fear of falls.

**Activity-** Yogic postures like stork stand, balancing using a wall etc can be good balancing exercises.

**Cardio-** It gets the heart pumping but may make the individual feel a little short of breath. can help boost cardiovascular function, strengthen lungs and airways, and improve everyday stamina.

**Activity-** Aerobic exercise like Walking, swimming, and using the stationary bike are all good choices for older adults. Thirty minutes a day is the recommended amount. This can include three short, 10-minute sessions spread out over the day.

**Strength and power training-** Strength training builds up muscle with repetitive motion using weight or external resistance. Strength training helps prevent loss of bone mass, builds muscle, and improves balance- important for staying active and avoiding falls.

**Activity-** Though the word strength training is synonymous with heavy weights care should be taken by elder that the weights that they use are very minimum and the exercise simple, low-impact bodyweight training exercises. These include wall pushups, stair climbing, squats, and single-leg stands. Some strength-training routines also incorporate light hand weights (1 to 2 lbs.) or resistance bands. Aim for two to three workouts weekly to reap the most benefits.

**Flexibility-** Flexibility workouts challenge the ability of your body's joints to move freely through a full range of motion. Yoga is an excellent means of improving flexibility. Flexibility helps your body stay limber and increases your range of movement for ordinary physical activities.

**Activity-** Yoga is a low-impact activity, which helps you build up your muscles, improve the core, enhance flexibility, and strengthen the bones without strain your joints. As yoga has exercises done while standing, sitting and sleeping postures, individuals can choose from what is more advantageous and effective to them.

**Pilates:** As yoga, Pilates offers an effective workout while being gentle on joints. It focuses on building a strong core in order to improve balance and stability and has been shown to reduce the symptoms of arthritis, multiple sclerosis (MS), and Parkinson's disease.

### Benefits of Exercises for Seniors

#### Physical & Physiological

**Prevents Bone Loss:** Exercise regime basically strength

training not only helps build muscles but also bones. Having stronger bones leads to fewer fractures and can also aid in balance. By reducing the risk of falls and injuries, exercise can help seniors live independently for longer.

**Relieves Osteoarthritis Pain:** By indulging in low- impact cardiovascular activity, strength training, and range-of-motion exercises seniors can see alleviation in Arthritis. It takes pressure off aching joints by strengthening the surrounding muscles. Physical activity may also help ease joint inflammation and aid in lubrication, which reduces pain and stiffness.

**Helps Prevent Chronic Disease:** Exercise provides a protective effect against a host of chronic illnesses, including cardiovascular disease, colon cancer, diabetes, obesity, and hypertension. If you already have a chronic condition, physical activity can minimize symptoms. It can even help reduce cognitive decline.

**Boosts Immunity: Exercise helps to** However, there are many theories. Some scientists believe that the anti-inflammatory effects of physical activity enable better immune function. Exercise may also improve the performance of immune cells.

**Improved healing and function-** Exercises and physical activity helps a healthy, strong body to better fight off infection and makes recovery from illness or injury easier.

**Prevention of disease or chronic conditions-** According to the National Institute of Aging, exercising as a senior may delay or even prevent diseases like diabetes, cancer, stroke, heart disease and osteoporosis, just to name a few.

#### Mental Health Benefits-Exercise can also help you to:

**Improve how well you sleep:** A good quality is important for our overall health as we get older. Regular activity can help you fall asleep faster, sleep more deeply, and wake feeling more energetic and refreshed.

**Boost your mood and self-confidence:** Physical Activity is a huge stress reliever and the endorphins produced can actually help reduce feelings of sadness, depression, and anxiety. Being active and feeling strong can also help you feel more self-confident.

**Improve your brain function -** Physical activity can keep the brain active by enhancing factors like brain functions as diverse as multitasking and creativity, and help to prevent memory loss, cognitive decline, and dementia. Getting active may even help slow the progression of brain disorders such as Alzheimer's disease.

**Improves Mood:** Simply put, exercise makes us feel good. It can help ease anxiety and depression symptoms, increase relaxation, and create an overall sense of well being.

Not all individuals are the same. There may be individuals who are not interested in taking part in any form of exercise for whatever reason. But just sitting idle would not be the right way to lead a healthy life. Below are some activities one can take up without following any exercise regime.

- Listen to music or an audiobook while lifting weights.
- Window shop while walking laps at the mall.
- Go for small hikes in a group.

- Instead of chatting with a friend over coffee, chat while walking, stretching, or strength training.
- Walk a dog if you have one.
- Go for a run, walk, or cycle when you're feeling stressed—see how much better you feel afterwards.

### **Points to remember before and after taking up a Exercise Regime.**

- Getting started safely- Getting active is one of the healthiest decisions you can make as you age, but it's important to do it safely.
- Get medical clearance- from your doctor before starting an exercise program, especially if you have a preexisting condition. Ask if there are any activities you should avoid.
- Consider health concerns- Keep in mind how your ongoing health problems affect your workouts. For example, diabetics may need to adjust the timing of medication and meal plans when setting an exercise schedule.
- Listen to your body- Exercise should never hurt or make you feel lousy. Stop exercising immediately and call your doctor if you feel dizzy or short of breath, develop chest pain or pressure, break out in a cold sweat, or experience pain.
- Start slow and build up steadily- If you haven't been active in a while, build up your exercise program little by little. Try spacing workouts in ten-minute increments twice a day.
- Prevent injury and discomfort by warming up, cooling down, and keeping water handy.
- Commit to an exercise schedule for at least three or four weeks so that it becomes a habit and force yourself to stick with it. This is much easier if you find activities you enjoy.

Once you have taken care of your exercise regime your diet too needs to be taken care of. Diet as well as exercise can have a major impact on your energy, mood, and fitness. Many older adults don't get sufficient high-quality protein in their diets, despite evidence suggesting they need more than younger people to maintain energy levels and lean muscle mass, promote recovery from illness and injury, and support overall health. Older adults without kidney disease or diabetes should aim for about 0.5 grams of protein per pound of body weight.

- Vary your sources of protein instead of relying on just red meat, including more fish, poultry, beans, and eggs.
- Reduce the amount of processed carbohydrate you consume—pastries, cakes, pizza, cookies and chips—and replace them with high-quality protein.
- Snack on nuts and seeds instead of chips, replace a baked dessert with Greek yogurt, swap out slices of pizza for a grilled chicken breast and a side of beans.

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