

Healthy Aging: Both Physically and Mentally

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Physical activity and exercise are good for our hearts, waistlines and bone health.

Older adults gain many health benefits by engaging in physical activity. Physical activity is good for our hearts, waistlines and bone health. Living a physically active lifestyle can help older adults stay strong and fit, allowing them to keep doing their daily routine. Making physical activity a regular part of one's life improves health and helps maintain independence with age.

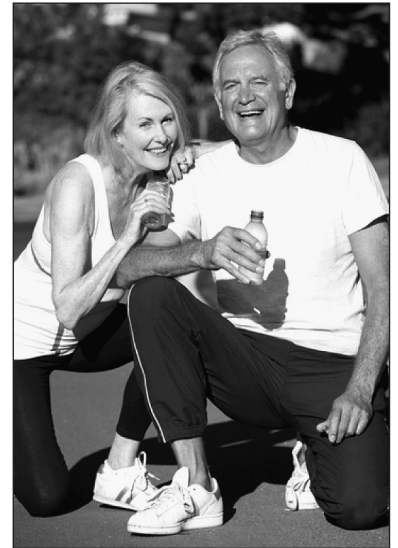
Maintaining a Healthy Weight

It is important as one grows older to maintain a healthy weight. If one continues to eat the same amount of food without increasing one's activity level, the result will most likely be weight gain. With age one's metabolism slows down and muscle mass is lost, therefore we are not able to burn off as many calories as we once were.

The secret to maintaining a healthy weight is to balance "energy in" and "energy out." Energy in means the calories you get from the food and beverages you consume. Energy out means the calories you burn for basic body functions and during physical activity. To maintain your weight, burn the same number of calories you consume. To lose weight, burn more calories than you consume and to gain weight, burn fewer calories than you consume.

Other ways to maintain a healthy weight are to:

- Limit portion sizes to control calorie intake.
- Add more physical activity into your daily routine.
- Keep hydrated with water.
- Add resistance training exercises to your routine.



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Benefits of an Active Lifestyle

In addition to weight maintenance, physical activity has many benefits to overall physical health with age.

- Physical activity reduces the impact of illness and chronic disease. Exercise benefits for adults over 50 include better immune function, heart health and blood pressure, bone density, and digestive functioning. Physical activity on a regular basis lowers risk of diabetes, obesity, heart disease, osteoporosis and certain types of cancer.
- Physical activity enhances mobility, flexibility and balance in older adults.

What Is Good For Your Body Is Also Good For Your Brain

Physical activity has a significant impact on several cognitive and psychological factors. There is evidence that regular physical activity is associated with improvements in overall psychological health and well-being.

- Overall fitness levels and aerobic exercise training decrease one's risk for both clinical depression and anxiety. Older adults that are physically active have better self-esteem and self-concepts.
- Studies have linked participation in regular physical activity with a reduced risk for dementia or cognitive decline in older adults. Even single bouts of exercise can result in improvement to short-term memory, attention and tasks related to cognitive performance.
- Resistance training can improve several aspects of psychological health including improving depression, anxiety and overall quality of life.

Tips for an Active Lifestyle

- Women 55 and older and men 45 and older are generally thought to be at higher risk and may need to seek a physician's advice before beginning an exercise program.
- Focus on moderately intense activities.
- Activities should be enjoyable or fun.

- Exercising with a friend or companion has been shown to increase exercise compliance.
- Older adults should properly warm up and cool down before and after exercise.
- Drink plenty of water.

Myths About Exercise and Aging

Myth 1: Older people shouldn't exercise. They should save their strength and rest.

Fact: A sedentary lifestyle is unhealthy for adults over 50. Inactivity often causes older adults to lose the ability to do things on their own and can lead to various medical issues.

Myth 2: Exercise puts me at risk of falling down.

Fact: Regular exercise prevents loss of bone mass and improves balance, actually reducing the risk of falling.

Myth 3: There's no point to exercising. I'm already too old to start.

Fact: Exercise and strength training help you look and feel younger and stay active longer. If you've never exercised before or it's been a while, start with light walking and other gentle activities. Regular physical activity lowers your risk for a variety of health conditions.

Examples of Beneficial Activities:

- Walking
- Yoga
- Senior sports or fitness classes
- Resistance or strength-training
- Water aerobics/water sports

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