

HEALTH&WELLNESS



ABOVE L TO R: Hechtman Apartments Resident Eli Kam exercising. Meer Resident Ada Bandalene teaches an exercise class. **LEFT:** Hechtman Apartments residents Adele Nodler and Harry Doren exercising.

Jewish Senior Life Motivates Residents to Stay Active

Wellness centers, daily fitness offerings and group walks boost physical and mental health.

ASHLEY ZLATOPOLSKY CONTRIBUTING WRITER

It's no secret that fitness is a crucial building block of health and wellness for people of all ages, but it's especially important for older adults to stay active — even if it means a bit of modification.

Active older adults may see improved sleep quality, lower levels of anxiety and reduced blood pressure. Regular physical exercise can also reduce the risk of dementia, lower the risk of heart disease and stroke, and keep bones strong, which can help prevent falls and breaks.

It's for these reasons and more that Jewish Senior Life has made fitness a key cornerstone of its senior living communities. Older adults have diverse

opportunities to stay fit, active and engaged at JSL's six communities on its two campuses in West Bloomfield and Oak Park.

Buildings are equipped with wellness centers complete with senior-friendly exercise equipment designed to help support healthy aging, like treadmills, bikes and weights. There are also resistance bands and balance tools to help boost mobility, joint strength and coordination.

SOCIAL APPROACH TO FITNESS

Residents can partake in a variety of on-site fitness classes, some of which are taught by residents themselves. Daily

wellness offerings include chair yoga and regular yoga, strength training, cardio drumming, tai chi, qigong, meditation and balance programs.

A community favorite is a chair strength training class taught by none other than Meer Apartments resident and longtime fitness instructor Ada Bandalene, 92, who has taught fitness classes for more than 65 years. Bandalene, a championship swimmer, teaches back and shoulder exercises that help improve gait, balance and strength.

"Fitness keeps our bodies awake and our minds sharp," she says. "Fitness goes beyond exercise classes. It's a holistic approach that encompasses healthy

eating, mindfulness and socialization."

Which is why JSL also takes community-building into account with its fitness offerings. Group classes help residents stay socially connected, which is essential for mental wellbeing, while walking clubs and group activities like creative workshops promote social engagement.

Residents often walk in groups both indoors and outside the campus. Between fresh air and good company, they make new friends, build on old friendships and boost their physical health.

As of 2023, a newer collaboration with Powerback Rehabilitation also

continued on page 25



Meier Apartments residents during an exercise class

continued from page 22

provides onsite health and wellness services, plus physical, speech and occupational therapy to JSL residents.

Between fitness, wellness programs, spiritual offerings and rehabilitation care, JSL takes a multi-directional approach to helping its residents stay physically and mentally strong.

TIPS TO STAY ACTIVE

However, getting regular physical exercise isn't always easy (for people of all ages).

Busy schedules, family commitments and health conditions can make it tough to clock in consistent time at a fitness center or participate in a group fitness program.

To find — and stick — to a fitness routine you enjoy, JSL offers the following tips:

- Discover an exercise you love, whether that's dancing, swimming or walking outside
- Put exercise reminders on your schedule to make it real and more intentional
- Find an accountability partner to help you stay consistent and motivated
- Remember that balance exercises can help reduce falls and serious injuries

Jewish certified personal trainer Todd Weiss, who runs STRONG HOUSE by Todd Weiss Fit in Beverly Hills, also encourages older adults to

prioritize strength training as part of their fitness regimen.

"Strength training is going to be the best thing for overall longevity," Weiss explains. "As we get older, our muscle mass decreases. I would recommend that as we get older, incorporating one-to-two days of strength training can really help the aging process for older adults."

Weiss, who often trains older adults, recommends investing in a set of light weights, ideally 5-to-10 pounds. "Something as simple as that, you'd be surprised how much of an impact it can have," he says.

However, if strength training isn't feasible, Weiss says any movement is better than none.

Some simple ways to add more movement into your day is to set small, achievable goals.

This can be parking a few spots further away than usual from your destination, doubling the amount of steps you take in a day (such as from 2,000 to 5,000, or 5,000 to 10,000) or trying a free fitness video on YouTube, which has everything from chair yoga to gentle strength training.

"Movement is medicine," Weiss says. "As soon as you stop moving, that's when things can start to slow down, and you can run into some issues."

"Whether it be walking or yoga, anything is great." ☺

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