



A Publication of the Presbytery of West Virginia



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Issue 101 ♦ March 2018

Fitness Without the Gym
The Surgeon General recommends 30 minutes of moderate exercise most or every day of the week, but nobody said you have to use that time in the gym. There are lots of simple, fun ways to get a real workout.

Cardiovascular

Guidelines: 30 minutes most or all days of the week
Options: Walking, running, jump-roping, dancing, bike riding
To compute your maximum heart rate: 220 minus your age
For cardiovascular endurance: work out at 70 to 85 percent of your max HR
To lose weight: work out at 60 to 70 percent of your max HR

Flexibility

Guidelines: 10 to 15 minutes at least two to three times a week, focusing on key joints, such as hips, shoulders and back
Options: Yoga, Pilates, dancing, simple stretching

Muscular Strength/Endurance

Guidelines: Two times a week, eight to 10 exercises for major muscle groups (legs, arms, shoulders) with one or two sets of eight to 12 repetitions
Options: Resistance bands, stability bars, hand weights, body resistance exercises such as sit-ups, push-ups, etc.

How to Gain Stamina

by Nicole Carlin

As you grow older, you lose muscle mass and bone density, and you may find it difficult to keep doing simple activities. Fortunately, even a small amount of exercise can increase your stamina and help you perform daily tasks, such as walking up stairs, going food shopping and performing household chores.

Step 1: Start slowly if you are new to exercise. Try increasing the amount of time spent moving your body around the house. For example, walk up the stairs more frequently, do more demanding household chores or lift heavier objects in your house.

Step 2: Perform cardiovascular activities regularly. Find an activity that raises your heart rate that you can perform at least 30 minutes per day, five days a week. That's 150 minutes of cardiovascular activity per week. Some examples of cardio activities include walking, light jogging, riding a stationary bicycle and working on the elliptical machine.

Step 3: Add two days of strength training to your weekly exercise routine. Strength training is one of the best ways to keep your muscles healthy. Healthy, strong muscles will help you to exercise longer, increasing your stamina. For example, strengthen your biceps with bicep curls by holding a can of vegetables in each hand. Tuck your elbows in to your sides. Bend both elbows and curl your hands to meet your shoulders. Lower your hands back to your sides and repeat the exercise until your arm muscles are fatigued.

Step 4: Stretch your muscles regularly to combat muscle tightening. With disuse, your muscle fibers shrink and become shorter, cause you to lose flexibility and decreasing your range of motion. Before and after each exercise session, aim to stretch all your major muscle groups for at least five minutes. For example, stretch your calf muscles using a wall. Stand two feet from a wall and place your palms on the wall, fingers facing upward. Step the right foot forward so your toes touch the wall. Bend your elbows and lower your chin toward the wall, feeling the stretch in the calf. If you do not feel a stretch, walk your back foot further back.

Five reasons why you should remain active as an older adult, and why exercise is your golden ticket to optimal health, vitality and longevity

1) EXERCISE IMPROVES MOOD

Regular exercise releases feel-good endorphins and brain chemicals that enhance your sense of well-being. People that have spent years engaging in a brisk walk or yoga routine will tell you that an improved outlook on life is the single highest payoff related to regular exercise.

2) EXERCISE FOSTERS RELATIONSHIPS

Getting off the couch to exercise often means that you're not alone. Seniors who report little physical activity are usually the loneliest. When you meet with friends once a week for a walk, you're not only reaping the physical benefits of improved coordination and dexterity, but you're also meeting new people and maintaining existing friendships. Seniors need to socialize in order to live fulfilled and happy lives.

3) EXERCISE IMPROVES STRENGTH AND MOBILITY

You know that you lose muscle mass and flexibility with age. However, did you know that exercise improves blood circulation, cardiac and lung function, so you can reverse many of the symptoms of deteriorating health? *You just need 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day.* Nothing too hard that leaves you in a pool of sweat on the floor is required.

4) EXERCISE IMPROVES HEALING

The body's ability to heal skin wounds and recover from trauma slows with age. When older adults are active, an exercise-induced anti-inflammatory response occurs. The immune system will send a message to other parts of your body that says, "Healing needs to occur now!" Blood circulation will improve, and enhanced platelet aggregation will result in the body's ability to heal faster.

5) EXERCISE IMPROVES COGNITIVE HEALTH

Those walks up the stairs and secret dance moments in your bedroom do more than just improve your flexibility and reduce your waistline. Have you heard that physical activity in midlife and later years can protect you from dementia in old age? Studies in the U.S. and other countries are revealing that seniors who exercise regularly are less prone to the development of Alzheimer's or other cognitive diseases.

