

Improving and Maintaining Physical Activity

Why is exercise important?

Your risk of getting a health condition that affects your lifestyle and independence increases as you age. By eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly, you can continue to participate in the activities that bring meaning to your life. The benefits of exercise include:

- Maintaining independence at home
- Increased disease-fighting ability (immunity)
- Increased flexibility, balance, strength, and muscle control to help prevent falls
- Improved brain power / alertness
- Increased energy and endurance
- Improved stress management, mood, and outlook on life
- Weight loss and lower blood pressure

If you're 65 or older and generally fit, with no health conditions that limit your mobility, you should try to exercise daily. The right mix of different types of exercise can help you stay fit and reduce your overall health risks, including your risk for falling.

A good weekly exercise program should consist of 150 minutes of endurance or aerobic exercise that increases your breathing and heart rate, combined with strength training, flexibility, and balance exercises.

See some examples on [page 2](#).



Recommendations from my doctor

Be sure to talk to your doctor before you begin any type of new fitness program.

Exercise ideas for older adults

When exercising, mix up your routine. This will help you build strength in your whole body. Some examples include:



Walking. Even if you don't have time for a workout, you still need to put one foot in front of the other to get where you need to go. It's recommended that most people take 10,000 steps per day, whether they do a workout or not. Walking is free and it can have a huge impact on your health.



Swimming. There is a reason swimming is called the perfect exercise, especially for older adults. Water exercises increase your cardiovascular fitness and strengthen your muscles while putting minimal stress on your bones and joints.



Cycling or stationary bike. Riding a bike is another way to get low-impact cardiovascular exercise, which is ideal for those who want to increase their leg strength, but suffer from joint issues or osteoporosis. However, if you're not sure of your ability to ride in the street or on a sidewalk, try a spin class or stationary bike.



Aerobic and strength classes. There is no end to the list of group exercises available, from Zumba and ballroom dance classes to weight lifting, boot camps, and chair aerobics. Not only will you have fun and make new friends, but your chances of making exercise a habit are greatly increased.



Yoga and Pilates. Yoga and Pilates are low-impact, joint-friendly activities that focus on increasing strength, balance, and stability. This makes them especially good for improving balance and managing stress in older adults.



Bodyweight training. These exercises make your muscles stronger and help build endurance without any special equipment. Simple bodyweight exercises like chair squats, single-leg stands, wall pushups, and stair climbing will help keep your body strong and flexible.



Resistance-band training. These inexpensive and beginner-friendly tools are perfect for home workouts. They can help you challenge your muscles in ways you can't without equipment. For example, when it comes to strengthening your back (important for balance and good posture), rows and other pulling motions are vital — but they can be tough to do without exercise equipment. A resistance band allows you to use your body's resistance to simulate these types of exercises.



Pickleball. This new aerobic workout is perfect for older adults because it is easy to play, very social, and less stressful on muscles, tendons, and joints.