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Healthy Insights

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Exercise

Staying active as you get older is an important way to stay independent and make simple, daily activities easier, such as grocery shopping, doing laundry, making your bed, and watching your grandkids. Exercising regularly can also help alleviate body aches and pain. Having a consistent weekly or daily exercise routine has both mental and physical benefits.

Mentally, exercise can:

- Reduce anxiety and stress levels
- Boost emotional well-being and energy levels
- Improve mood



Some physical benefits include:

- Improving sleep quality
- Managing weight and weight loss
- Reducing health risks (including falls, heart disease, common cancers)
- Strengthening muscles
- Increasing lifespan
- Improving chronic conditions like type 2 diabetes, arthritis, and high blood pressure

Checking in With Your Healthcare Provider Before Exercising

Everyone has a different medical history that may affect their workout routines. Ask your healthcare provider about the amount of exercise that is right for you, as well as which types of exercises you should and should not do. If you start to experience any alarming symptoms during or after exercise, such as chest pain or shortness of breath, stop physical activity and tell your doctor as soon as possible. It is also important to ask if there are any tests that need to be conducted before you start building an exercise plan. Talking to your doctor about exercise can minimize the risk of injury or complications.

How Much to Exercise

It's best to start out slow and build a routine that brings together strength, endurance, flexibility, and balance training. By combining muscle strengthening activities with moderate aerobic exercise, you can create a well-rounded plan. Experts recommend 150 minutes of aerobic exercise over the span of at least three days a week. Add muscle-strengthening activities twice a week. Participating in both aerobic and muscle-strengthening physical activities a few days each week improves your endurance, balance, and flexibility.

Types of Exercise

You don't need a gym membership or expensive equipment to support a fitness routine. Instead, think about your favorite forms of movement and your current physical abilities. Here are a few suggestions:

- Take a brisk walk around your neighborhood
- Swim in your community pool
- Take a dance class
- Find in-person or online yoga classes or try chair yoga in your own home
- Bicycle through your town
- Do some yard work/gardening

Keep in mind that some of these activities might be too difficult, so talk to your doctor before you start. To make it more fun and make it less likely that you will skip your workout, find a partner to exercise with you. Keep a workout planner to stay consistent. And don't get discouraged if you miss some workouts; just slowly start again.



Sources

How much physical activity do older adults need? | Physical Activity | CDC <http://bit.ly/44pOGBu>

How Older Adults Can Get Started With Exercise | NIA <http://bit.ly/3YTXGNY>

Benefits of Physical Activity | Physical Activity | CDC <http://bit.ly/3YX45rJ>



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IPRO Healthy Insights comes from Dr. Clare Bradley, IPRO's Senior Vice President/Chief Medical Officer, a nationally recognized public health advocate.

IPRO is a non-profit organization that works with government agencies, providers and patients to measure and improve healthcare for all. For over 35 years we've made creative use of clinical expertise, emerging technology and data solutions to make the healthcare system work better.