

# Exercises for Seniors: Tips for Core, Balance, Stretching

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## Successful Aging

We can't help getting older, but we can age successfully. The more active, healthy, and fit you are now, the better you will feel as you get older.



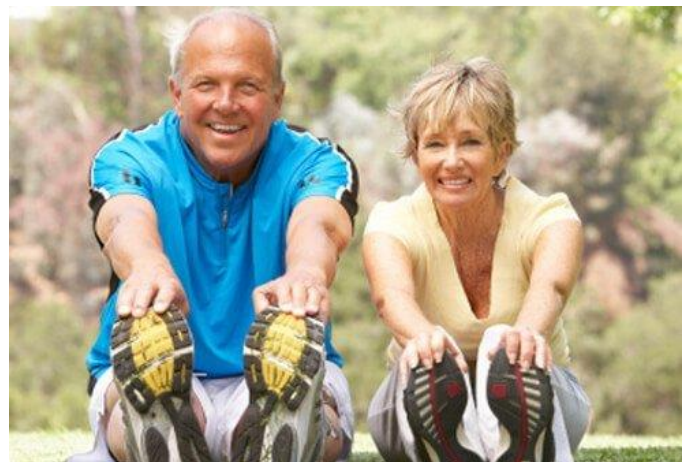
## The Aging Population

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that by 2030 there will be 73.1 million people over the age of 65 – 21% of the population. By 2040, the number of people 85 and older is expected to reach 14.4 million. By 2050, the number should be closer to 18.6 million Americans over age 85, according to US Census projections.



## It's Never Too Late to Start Exercising

Exercise is an important key to aging successfully. It's never too late to start. In the following slides, we will look at how our bodies age, the benefits of exercising into old age, and tips to get started on your fitness journey.



## What Happens to Muscles As We Age?

As we age, muscle mass decreases. Between the third and eighth decades of life, we lose up to 15% of our lean muscle mass, which contributes to a lower metabolic rate as we get older. Maintaining muscle strength and mass helps burn calories to maintain a healthy weight, strengthens bones, and restores balance.



## Is It Ever Too Late to Build Muscle?

It's never too late to exercise and build muscle. The body is responsive to strength training at any age. Strength training can help reduce symptoms of some common problems we encounter as we age including arthritis, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, back pain, and depression.



## Can I Get Stronger Without Building Big Muscles?

Strength doesn't just involve building large muscles. Lifting weights just two or three times a week can increase strength by building lean muscle. Studies have shown that even this small an amount of strength training can increase bone density, overall strength, and balance. It can also reduce the risk of falls that can lead to fractures.



## What Happens to Endurance As We Age?

Just as muscle mass declines with age, so does endurance. The good news is that the body also responds to endurance fitness training such as walking. Any activity that increases heart rate and breathing for an extended period is considered endurance exercise. In addition to walking, swimming, cycling, dancing, and tennis are all endurance activities.



## What Happens to Flexibility As We Age?

Along with muscle mass and endurance, flexibility also decreases as we age. But like strength and endurance, flexibility too can be improved. Increased flexibility allows for more freedom of movement and greater range of motion. Areas to pay attention to are the neck, shoulders, elbows, wrists, hips, knees, and ankles.



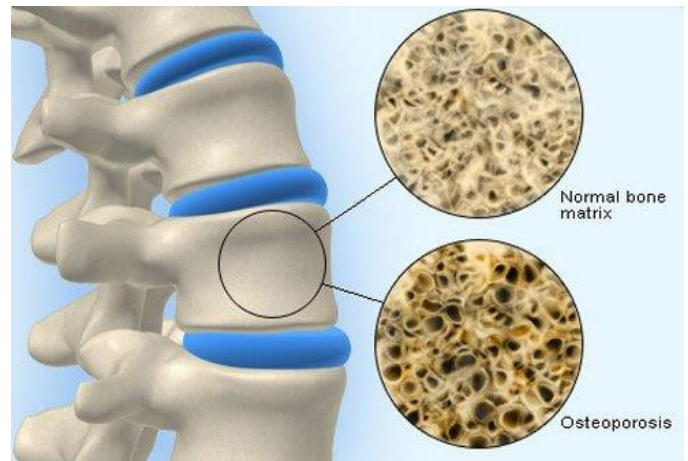
## What Happens to Balance As We Age?

As we age, balance decreases and falls can lead to fractures. The National Institutes of Health estimates more than one-third of people over the age of 65 fall each year, often resulting in injuries such as hip fractures which are a major cause of surgeries and disability among the elderly. Balance and strength exercises can help maintain balance and reduce the risk of falling.



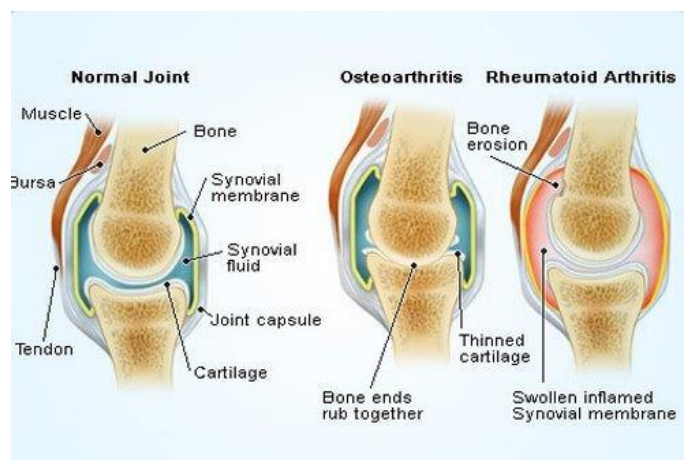
## What Happens to Bones As We Age?

As we age, bone density decreases as well and can lead to osteoporosis, a condition in which the bones become fragile and weak, and are more prone to fractures. More than 40 million Americans have or are at risk for osteoporosis, and it is more common in women than in men. Exercise can increase bone strength and density. Weight-bearing activity in particular is useful as this causes the bones to work harder. Strength training as well strengthens muscles and helps strengthen bones.



## What Happens to Our Joints As We Age?

Osteoarthritis becomes more common as we age – about 27 million people in the U.S. have osteoarthritis, a condition in which the cartilage between the joints breaks down, causing stiffness, pain, and loss of movement in the joints. One of the best ways to manage osteoarthritis is to stay active and maintain a healthy weight. Lack of movement contributes to stiffness and weak joints. Exercises include those for range of motion and flexibility, endurance, and strength.



## Does Exercise Help Cognitive Function?

Exercise helps with cognitive function. Studies have shown that regular physical activity can slow declines in memory and protect somewhat against dementia.



## Can Exercise Improve Mood?

Exercise has been shown to improve mood. Depression is common in older adults, and exercise can have an antidepressant effect. It is thought that exercise may increase serotonin in the brain, which leads to better moods and less depression.



## How Much Exercise Do I Need to Do for Health and Fitness?

The American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association recommends exercise for older adults. See the chart for suggested guidelines for physical activity.

Senior Guidelines For Physical Activity	
<b>Aerobic Exercise</b> (walking, jogging, dancing, biking, swimming, etc.)	Older adults need moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity for a minimum of 30 minutes five days each week or vigorous intensity aerobic activity for a minimum of 20 minutes three days a week. (Moderate intensity is when you feel "warm and slightly out of breath," and vigorous is when you feel "out of breath and sweaty.")
<b>Resistance Exercise</b> (weight lifting, calisthenics)	Older adults will benefit from performing activities that maintain or increase muscular strength and endurance for a minimum of two days each week. It is recommended that eight to 10 exercises be performed on two or more nonconsecutive days per week using the major muscle groups.
<b>Flexibility Exercise</b>	To maintain the flexibility necessary for regular physical activity and daily life, older adults should perform activities that maintain or increase flexibility at least two days each week for at least 10 minutes each day.
<b>Balance Exercise</b>	To reduce risk of injury from falls, older adults with substantial risk of falls (for example, with frequent falls or mobility problems) should perform exercises that maintain or improve balance.

## How Do I Get Started?

Before starting any exercise program, talk to your doctor to find out what activities are right for you. It's important to start slowly, and build gradually. Doing too much, too soon can result in injury. Even a five-to-ten minute walk is a good starting place, and you can build from there. Motivate yourself with goals.



## Make a Weekly Exercise Plan

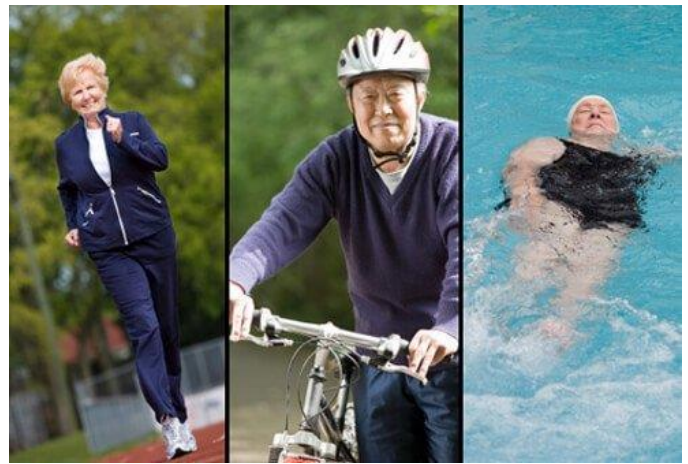
Schedule your exercise and you will be more likely to stick with it. Be consistent, and find the times and days that work best for you to get started. It doesn't matter how much you do in the beginning – just get out there and do it!



## Endurance and Aerobic Exercises

Any activity that increases heart rate and breathing for an extended period is considered endurance exercise. Endurance and aerobic exercises are good for your heart, lungs, and the circulatory system. Endurance gives you stamina for daily tasks, and can prevent many aging-related diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

Walking, running, cycling, swimming, aerobics classes, and tennis are all types of endurance exercise. Many gyms and senior centers offer exercise classes for seniors. Endurance exercise does not have to be strenuous to be beneficial.



## Strength and Resistance Exercises

Strength exercises will make you not only stronger, they will help you remain able to perform daily tasks, and they can increase metabolism allowing you to maintain a healthy weight. Strength exercises also play a role in keeping blood sugar levels healthy, which is important in preventing diabetes and obesity. Strength and resistance training may also help prevent osteoporosis by helping you maintain strong bones.

Resistance bands are an easy and inexpensive way to perform strength exercises at home. You can also use free weights, and/or machines at the gym./p>



## Flexibility Exercises

Exercises for flexibility help stretch muscles and surrounding connecting tissues. Stretching can prevent injuries and may help prevent falls. Yoga is an excellent way to improve flexibility. There are many different types of yoga so you can find one that suits your needs. Yoga studios, gyms, and the "Y" offer classes, and you can also do yoga at home with the help of DVDs, books, or apps for your phone.



## Balance Exercises

Stability and balance is important to prevent falls, which are a major cause of broken hips and disability in the elderly. When doing balance exercises, hold on to a table or chair to support yourself or have someone nearby who can support you if you lose your balance. Many senior centers offer classes on balance and your doctor can recommend exercises that are right for you.



## Go for It!

No matter what your age, exercise is good for you. It's never too late to start, and you can benefit from strength and resistance training, stretching and flexibility exercise, and endurance and aerobic exercises. Find exercise that you enjoy that fits into your schedule and get started!



### Sources:

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