

A man with grey hair and a beard, wearing a bright yellow hoodie, black pants with a yellow stripe, and black sneakers, is captured in a dynamic pose. He is performing a high kick with his right leg, holding a black bag in his right hand. His left arm is raised in a fist. The background is a plain, light brown wall.

Fitness for Seniors

Benefits of Lifting Weights

As long as your physical condition allows, strength training with light or medium weights should be a core part of your workout.

There are many benefits to lifting weights, according to U.S. News & World Report, including:

- Less abdominal fat.
- Better cardiovascular health.
- Controlled blood sugar levels.
- Reduced cancer risk.
- Lowered injury risks.
- Better mental health.
- Improved flexibility and mobility.

Always remember to talk with your physician about any restrictions you may have before getting started.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT WEIGHT

Lifting weights is great, but only if you understand how to do so in a way that doesn't harm your body. Especially for seniors who haven't worked out in a while, the risk of overloading your muscles is real.

You want to find the balance between challenging your body and overdoing it. One of the best ways to start out is to begin your new exercises with no weight to give your body a tune-up. After you feel good about your



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form, gradually add dumbbells or a barbell to your routine with minimum weight attached.

This progressive approach can help you avoid injury while still getting a grip on what your body can handle.

WEIGHTS VARY WITH EXERCISES

Consider the muscles you are exercising when determining how much weight to start off with. For example, your thighs are stronger than your biceps, so the amount of

weight you squat will probably be more than what you curl.

Once you find an ideal weight, try to increase it every so often by no more than five pounds at a time. This will help gradually strengthen

your targeted muscles.

Your best bet is to work with a personal trainer or fitness expert at your gym, who will be able to build a custom weight-lifting plan for your specific body and workout expertise level.

The Benefits of Walking

There aren't many exercises out there, if any, that are more key to your physical health than walking.

Consider people from older generations before the convenience of transportation. Our walk-happy ancestors were generally less obese because of the regular exercise they received from walking and other physical work.

Frequent walking has been found to lower stress, reduce blood pressure and regulate blood sugar. Even five minutes of walking per day can give you a health boost. So, strap on your tennis shoes and hit the sidewalks in your neighborhood. It's time to start giving your body the maintenance it deserves.

START SLOW

For beginners, five or 10 minutes of walking is a great start to better fitness and health. Find a safe, familiar place to walk where you can focus on your routine.

Don't forget to purchase a comfortable pair of walking shoes. Walking in a pair of uncomfortable shoes, especially if you haven't walked regularly in a while, can ruin the experience for you and lead to

strains, stiffness or soreness the next day.

TURN UP THE INTENSITY

Although a simple walking routine is great for your health, rev your engine by turning up the intensity and vary your speed. Incline is a great way to increase exercise intensity when walking. Adjust the incline on the treadmill or find a slightly sloped hill in your neighborhood park.

If you have any medical conditions or chronic illnesses that may get in the way of a new walking routine, consult your doctor before getting active. He or she will have recommendations on how you can integrate more walking into your everyday activities.

TRACK YOUR STEPS

A great way of motivating yourself to walk more is keeping a close eye on how many steps you're taking. You can find various step-tracking applications for your mobile phone. There are also wearables that you can incorporate into your workout gear.

Don't just use your tracking application for workouts, but also for your day-to-day activities like walking the dog, doing laundry or mowing the lawn.

You may be surprised to find how many calories you burn with just these simple activities.



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Join a Class

Finding the perfect exercise class for your workout routine does not need to be difficult.

A simple trip to your local gym can uncover many opportunities for you to get plugged into a new program. You never know who you'll meet or what kinds of benefits you'll receive from doing so. Need some help? Read our tips below on finding the right workout class for you.

WATER AEROBICS

Water aerobics is a safe, effective exercise that is easy on the joints and great for the heart. Check with your local gym or recreation program to find out what kinds of classes they offer.

Here are some benefits to water aerobics to consider during your research:

- Increased flexibility.
- Improved heart and lung functions.
- Enhanced balance.
- Build strength.
- Relieve pain and arthritis.

PICKLEBALL

Another fun activity gaining in popularity for seniors is pickleball. Racquet sports in general boost the cardiovascular system which helps prevent issues like hypertension, stroke and heart attack.

Played indoors or outdoors on a court smaller than a regular tennis court, pickleball



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gives you a good aerobic workout while limiting joint stress. The smaller court means that most points do not require an extensive amount of movement, but more of a stop-and-start activity level that helps improve your cardiovascular health.

YOGA

Yoga is a holistic practice combining physical poses

with breathing techniques and peaceful meditation. This combination can leave you feeling rejuvenated, both physically and mentally. According to the Do Yoga With Me, the online platform offering yoga advice and video tutorials, studies have found that yoga can:

- Lower the risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Recovery from strokes and surgery.

- Prevent falls.
- Manage arthritis, pain and inflammation.
- Manage diabetes.
- Manage digestive issues like IBS.
- Improve sleep quality.
- Facilitate the grieving process.
- Manage depression and anxiety.

Yoga can reduce feelings of anger and anxiety, as well as increases to their sense of

well-being and self-efficacy.

FIND A CLASS

The AARP teamed up with the International Council on Active Aging to build a simple tool for older adults to find senior fitness programs and exercise classes near them.

Check out the International Council on Active Aging website at <https://www.icaa.cc/facilitylocator/facilitylocator.php> to find a facility near you.

Nutrition + Exercise

We've all heard that eating healthy and exercising are keys to a longer life. The importance of these habits is paramount for seniors looking to prevent common health-related issues.

Eating a good balance of foods from a variety of food groups is absolutely essential. The best nutrition plans for seniors incorporate fruit, vegetables, whole grains, dairy, lean meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts.

Not sure where to start on improving your overall nutrition and workout effectiveness? Work with your physician or nutritionist to find a plan that works well for you.

BASIC NUTRITION GUIDELINES

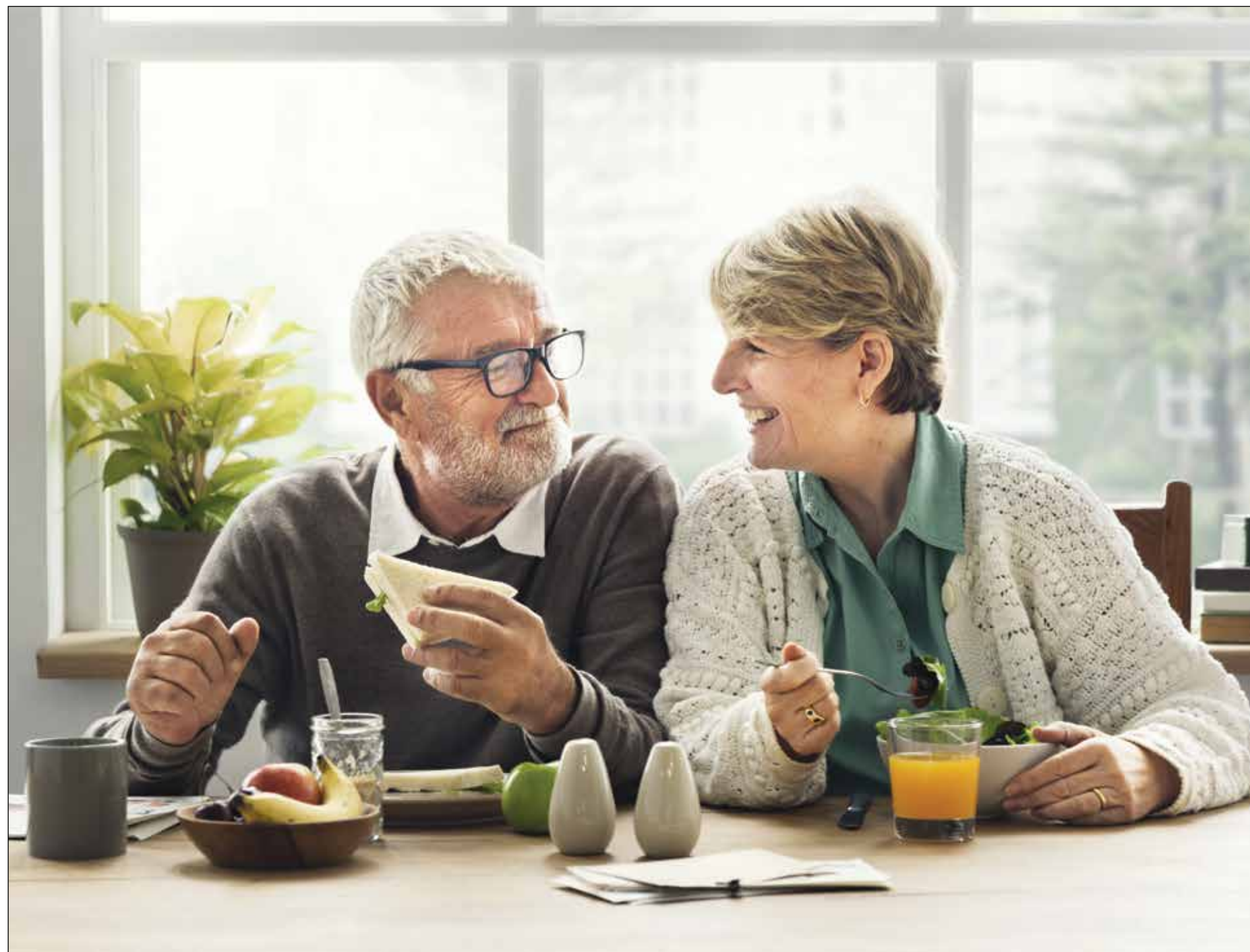
Start with these recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans:

Eat fruits and vegetables. They can be fresh, frozen or canned. Eat more dark green vegetables such as leafy greens or broccoli, and orange vegetables such as carrots and sweet potatoes.

Vary protein choices with more fish, beans and peas.

Eat at least three ounces of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice or pasta every day.

Have three servings of low-



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fat or fat-free dairy (milk, yogurt or cheese) that are fortified with vitamin D to help keep your bones healthy.

Make the fats you eat healthy ones (polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats). For example, switch from solid fats to oils when preparing food.

ADD PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The other key piece of living a healthier, longer life is implementing a consistent exercise plan. Balancing physical activity and a healthful diet will leave you feeling better and help improve your chances of a stronger body.

The Academy of Nutrition

and Dietetics recommends that seniors set a goal to be physically active at least 30 minutes every day. This does not necessarily need to be done all at once. If you're short on time, you can break these into three 10-minute sessions throughout your day.

If you haven't exercised in a

while, it's best to work up gradually to these goals. With the blessing of your doctor, start with a daily brisk walk to test your body before incorporating any weight training or sports activity. Once you've got your legs under you, it's time to start adding exercises to your routine.

Preventing Injury

No matter how many years and how much mileage you've put on your body, it needs physical activity to continue to thrive.

That's why developing and sticking to a consistent exercise plan is so critical to seniors. But just as important as regular exercise is making sure you are performing your workouts in a safe, effective manner. The risk of injury is real, especially for older adults who may be experiencing a loss in muscle or a decrease in the elasticity of their tendons and ligaments.

The good news is that with proper stretching and a full understanding of what your body can and cannot endure, you can stay safe as you tackle new exercise challenges, either by yourself or with a strong group of workout friends.

COMMON INJURIES

The most common injuries for seniors during exercise involve sprains or strains around the shoulders, knees and ankles. While there are various grades of injury to these areas, they are not typically severe and may only cause minor soreness or stiffness.

The issue is that, without care and rest, these injuries may lead to more soreness



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and further pain. That's why knowing your body and its limits is so important to your overall health and well-being.

HOW TO PREVENT INJURIES

Before you get started, follow these tips from the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention.

Get a basic medical screening. Talking with your doctor can help you uncover any conditions you may have that would put you at risk of specific injuries.

Find a balanced exercise program. Depending on one sport or activity day in and

day out can actually hold your body back. Your fitness program needs variety, so consider adding different activities to your overall routine.

Take lessons. It's OK to not know exactly how to get started. There are professionals for that. Hire a coach or licensed athletic trainer to help you

learn about new activities, maintain proper form and achieve your fitness goals.

Follow the 10% rule. When you are ready to increase your activity level, do so in 10% increments. This applies to time or weight that you may be considering adding to your workout routine.

Get Moving: Find your Sport

Senior exercise programs can incorporate multiple physical activities, including sports both competitive and non-competitive. If you're looking for a new way to work out while also getting all of the benefits of sporting activities, check out our list of possible options below.

As always, be sure to check with your physician or workout coach before starting a new sport.

SWIMMING

Swimming gives the body a complete workout, helping improve both your muscular and cardiovascular systems. Water gives resistance to your workout routine, which makes you burn more calories and create more muscle mass.

In terms of the cardio benefits, your body is forced to work harder in the water to pump oxygen. This leads to a better workout for your heart and lungs. One of the other main benefits of swimming is you can do it in groups. Doing so lets you meet new people and improve your social life. There are likely competitive and recreational senior swimming classes at your local



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gym, so check with their fitness staff today.

CYCLING

Do you enjoy cycling as exercise? If so, then you're not alone. A 2015 report by the group Active Network found that baby boomers (seniors ages 55 and up) represent the fastest growing demographic when it comes to total number of cycling event registrations in the United States.

And for good reason. According to the AHA, cycling just 20 miles a week can reduce the risk of heart disease by 50%. And the cycling advocacy organization Cycle Nation has determined that an adult cyclist typically has a level of fitness equivalent to someone 10 years younger.

Look into your local cycling opportunities by checking in with your tourism board or parks and recreation leagues.

You may just find a new sport that is easy on the joints and great for your body.

GOLF

If you're looking for one of the most cardio-friendly activities, you may find that golf is the perfect sport for you. Especially if you choose to walk the course versus driving a cart, you can stack up some major steps while playing a round of golf. The sport gets

you out in the fresh air and can also challenge your mind. There are different clubs for different shots and distances, requiring you to think creatively and understand your own swing.

Played with friends, golf can be a great way to socialize and meet new people, as well. The beauty of golf is its accessibility. There are likely a handful of courses in your area to choose from, so start swinging today.

Find a Great Personal Trainer

Finding a personal trainer for seniors can be tough, especially if you're just getting started on improving your overall fitness.

Personal trainers can help you perfect your exercise form, meaning better results with fewer injuries. They can also show you how to use gym equipment, stretch properly and motivate you to stay on track.

Here are some other tips to finding great local personal trainers that will boost your fitness without breaking the bank.

START WITH YOUR LOCAL GYM

If you have a good gym in your area, that's likely the best place to find a personal trainer for your workout needs. Get a list of your gym's trainers and ask around for recommendations. This will give you a good start on knowing which professionals are available.

Remember that certification is crucial. Make sure your personal fitness trainer has been certified by at least one of the major national organizations. These include the American College of Sports Medicine, the American Council on Exercise, the National Strength and Conditioning Association, or the National Academy of



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Sports Medicine.

ASK QUESTIONS

Once you put together a list of trainers you'd like to speak with, prepare a list of questions so you can make sure you get a full picture of their qualifications. Questions like:

- What are your credentials?
- Are you certified by a major fitness organization?

- Do you have experience training seniors?

- What do you charge for your personal training services?

- What do your services encompass?

- How will you measure the success of our work together?

BE OPEN

The best personal trainers

offer a personalized touch.

They aren't simply programming you into their client list, but taking the time to learn about your fitness goals and customize a plan for you.

He or she will consider your age, fitness history, physical limitations and exercise preferences to create the best program for your needs. They may also be able to offer

nutrition tips to help you maintain your positive fitness momentum once you leave the gym.

This kind of custom attention will require your honesty and openness to changing your lifestyle. Without this commitment, you may end up spinning your wheels instead of seeing real progress.