

# Fitness for Seniors



# Tap Into the Fountain of Youth

Along with a balanced diet, exercise may be a key to the fountain of youth for seniors.

According to the American Association of Retired Persons, physical activity helps maintain healthy blood vessels that provide good circulation to the body and brain. Committing to practicing an active lifestyle is a beneficial way to sharpen both your mind and overall health.

If you're ready to take control of your fitness but are hesitant to join a gym, you may find several types of exercise to perform at home. From walking around your neighborhood to incorporating physical challenges into your daily routine, seniors gain immense health benefits from small changes. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that older adults follow these guidelines to keep their bodies fit and working efficiently.

- Three hundred minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity.

- Vigorous aerobic exercise should be performed for 150 minutes per week.

Suppose you have lived a mostly sedentary lifestyle. In that case, it's essential to speak with your medical provider before beginning a new exercise routine. They can monitor your fitness levels and advise you toward exercises that you



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can perform safely.

Check out how exercise may be the secret to tapping into the fountain of youth.

## KEEP SKIN YOUTHFUL

One of the many changes that come with age includes a faltered skin appearance. According to the U.S. National

Library of Medicine, this occurs as the outer skin layer thins, even though the number of cell layers remains unchanged. An active lifestyle promotes increased blood flow, which sends more oxygen and eliminates waste, enhancing skin cells, keeping them healthy and vital.

Additionally, sweating allows our pores to open to stop waste and toxins from becoming clogged.

## BOOSTS METABOLISM

The Mayo Clinic defines metabolism as the process by which your body converts what you eat and drink into

energy. As we age, the amount of muscle tends to decrease, and fat becomes more prevalent. Weight gains and high-body fat can result in serious health issues like diabetes and heart disease. Exercise is key to maintaining a healthy weight and regulating metabolism during the senior years.

# Take On an Exercise Challenge

Older adults must remain active to promote better health and lessen their risks of developing severe disease.

Physical activity can also help seniors remain independent longer, improve their balance and ensure they can enjoy activities with their families.

Fortunately, numerous programs exist that provide senior citizens with exercise plans and provide encouragement to set and achieve physical milestones. Whether you're a senior yourself or know someone who could benefit from increased mobility, there are multiple plans to consider. Check out some of the most effective programs, proven by their evidence-based physical activity programs, as recommended by the National Council on Aging.

## ACTIVE CHOICES

Active Choices is a six-month physical activity program designed to incorporate beneficial exercise into a daily routine. The plan is advantageous to those with hectic schedules, as most advice is given through telephone briefings. After an initial video meeting, seniors are met with a realistic, individualized activity plan based on their health status. Look into this program if you're able to take on a new physical activity that could improve your overall health, and as always, check with your



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physician before starting a new program.

## ACTIVE LIVING EVERY DAY

This program's prerogative aims to educate seniors about innovative, informative products that lead to healthier and more active lives. In addition to focusing on better health's physical aspect, the experts encourage beneficial foods

through their Healthy Eating Every Day program.

## ENHANCE FITNESS

This is a low-cost, physical activity program developed to increase awareness of health and fall prevention. Mature participants receive a customized workout plan focused on four key categories:

- Low-impact cardio.
- Dynamic and static bal-

ance.

- Strength training.
- Stretching.

Traditionally, classes meet three times per week to go over goals and train, providing social stimulation.

## HEALTHY MOVES FOR AGING WELL

Seniors with limited mobility benefit from this in-home exercise program. The routines

are specifically designed to maximize independence by building strength, increasing flexibility and reducing the risk of falling. For those who cannot perform the physical activity safely, the plan includes managers who assist their clients from the comfort of home. Over time, the workouts are assessed and adjusted to meet new goals as a senior shows progress.

# Committing to Cardio

Promoting better cardiovascular health is beneficial at every age but becomes increasingly important as we age.

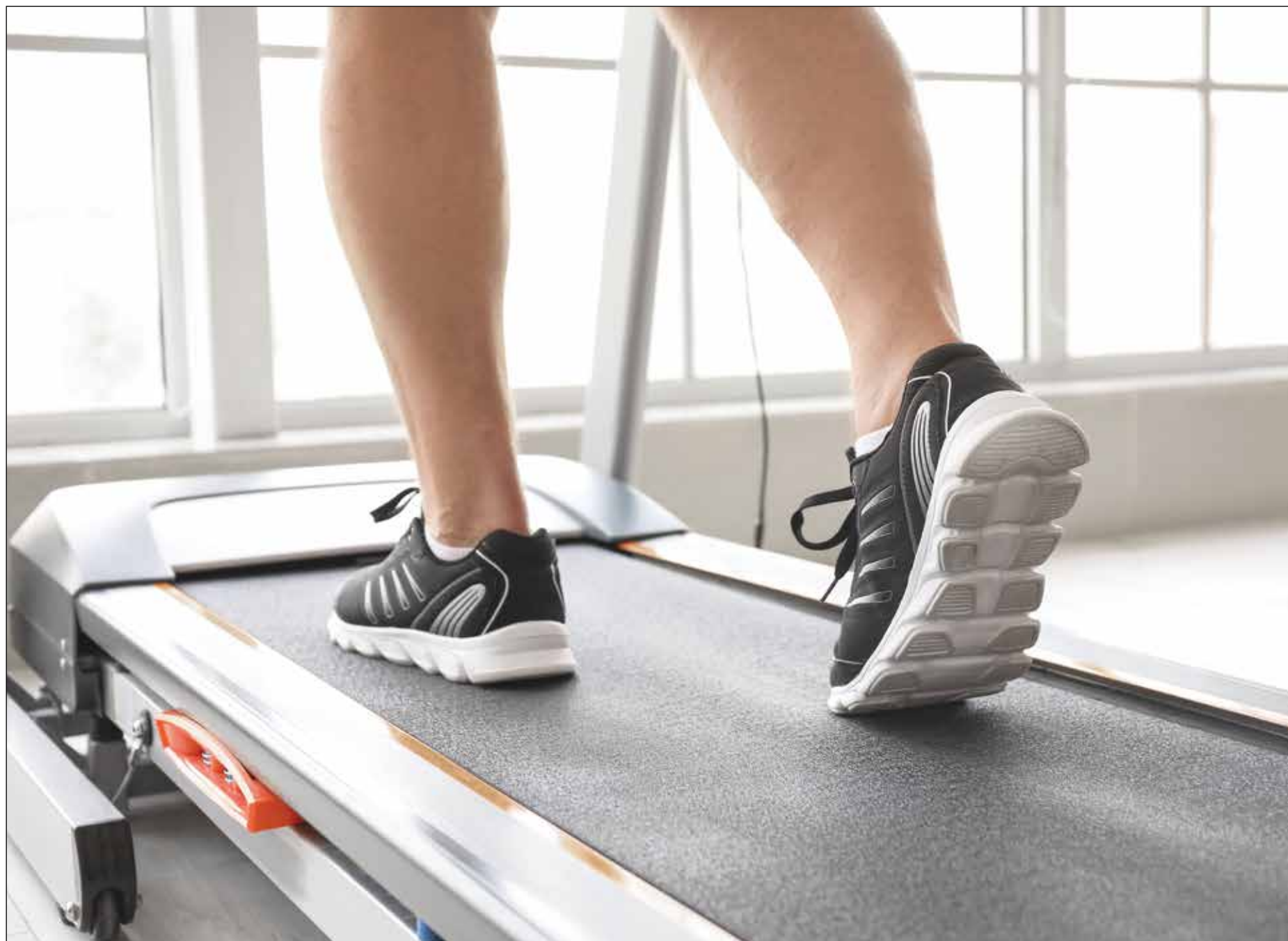
Some think that a cardio routine is only helpful to the heart and lungs, but it also improves the mind, encourages more energy, manages weight and reduces symptoms like anxiety and depression. Before jumping into a new exercise routine, create a real workout that makes sense as you begin and that you can build on once your cardio levels increase.

The American Academy of Family Physicians estimates that 75% of older Americans are insufficiently active to achieve essential health benefits. The group encourages senior citizens to incorporate an exercise prescription that includes aerobic activities, strength training and movements that enhance balance and flexibility.

With an efficient regimen, aging adults see reductions in mortality and age-related morbidity. The AAFP reports that there are numerous other health advantages that exercise improves, including:

- Blood pressure and diabetes.
- Lipid profile and osteoarthritis.
- Osteoporosis and neurocognitive function.

Consider these tips when



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you're dedicating a portion of your day to get active and take back your health.

## MAKE IT SOCIAL

While walking is a great activity to improve your cardiovascular endurance, sticking to a regimen can prove challenging. Check out these tips from the National Institute on Aging about the

benefits of organizing a walking club.

- **Accountability.** Seniors who belong to a walking group tend to stick with the exercise as other members depend on their participation.

- **Social benefits.** Being around others can provide emotional wellbeing, support mental health and combat loneliness and depression.

- **Travel in pacts.** Walking public paths may seem overwhelming but traveling with others produces safety in numbers.

## CARDIO AT HOME

If you'd rather work out from home, at least until you get more comfortable with cardio, consider investing in a stationary exercise machine.

Treadmills are popular and allow users to walk, jog or run at different speeds and various inclines.

Bicycles are also great tools that can be adjusted to strengthen or weaken the resistance needed for it to operate. An elliptical machine provides an impact-free way to bump up your heart rate for those with sore joints.



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# Body-Weight Training

Seniors don't need expensive equipment or gym memberships to journey toward better health with strength training.

You may be surprised that you can gain muscle and improve your balance by taking advantage of your own body weight. Developing a body-building routine is an excellent option as it takes up little time while providing incredible benefits.

Don't inhibit your attempt at building strength by sabotaging your efforts with an unbalanced diet. Eating foods rich in protein and low in fat or sugar can help build lean muscle mass while

shedding fat. Here are some tips from the National Council on Aging about what to add to your plate for optimal nutrition.

- Lean proteins like meats, seafood, eggs and beans.
- Fruits and vegetables of different colors, think orange, red, green and purple.
- Whole grains including brown rice or whole wheat pasta.
- Low-fat dairy like almond milk and fat-free cheese.

If you're hesitant about changing your diet, talk with a nutritionist to customize a dining plan. Be clear about your attempt at beginning a strength-building routine as you may require more calories than a sedentary lifestyle needs. Once you know the foods you should eat, consider adding

some of these excellent body-weight training exercises to your routine.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest these workouts improve bone density and strength and reduce the risk of falling for seniors.

## SQUATS

To perform this exercise that strengthens hips, thighs and buttocks, all you need is a chair. Stand directly in front of the seat with your feet shoulder-width apart. Extend your arms parallel to the ground and slowly lower yourself to a crouch. Once you're entirely stretched downward, hold the pose for four seconds before slowly rising to a standing position.

## WALL PUSH-UPS

A modified push-up that allows you

to perform the exercise without getting on the floor. Stand a little farther than arm's length from a wall and extend your body with your palms flat against it. Bend your elbows and lower your body toward the wall in a slow, controlled motion before bringing yourself back to the starting position.

## TOE STANDS

With your body facing the backrest of a chair, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart while you use it for balance. Push yourself as far as you can onto the balls of your feet and hold the position for four seconds before lowering your heels back to the floor. After you get the hang of toe stands, perform the move on a staircase to increase its intensity.

# Finding Fitness Motivation

You probably already know about the numerous benefits that exercise produces for both the mind and body. Still, while some people want to get involved in a physical regimen, finding the motivation to continue can prove challenging.

It's crucial to keep yourself active, especially as you age, even if it's difficult to find the energy to fit in a workout.

One way to remain engaged is to track your progress and share it with your peers. Use smart device apps to log your meals, exercise routines and weight loss successes. As you navigate the path to better physical fitness, set goals and celebrate milestones by treating yourself to trips or coveted items.

Follow these tips from the National Institute on Aging to get motivated and keep moving.



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## **MAKE EXERCISE FUN**

Sticking to a dedicated routine with the same exercises will get tiresome after a few attempts. Make it your commitment to keeping your workouts fresh while sprinkling in some fun during the action.

For instance, switch up the types of movements you do

and on what days. Don't forget to incorporate the four essential categories for seniors — endurance, strength, balance and flexibility.

You can also try to get your family involved in your commitment to better fitness. Invite your children, friends and grandchildren for walks, swimming lessons, jumping rope or playing catch.

Applying your loved ones creates a wholesome way to enjoy spending time together while benefitting your health.

## **INCORPORATE EXERCISE INTO YOUR DAILY ROUTINE**

You don't need a gym or dedicated time set aside to make room for exercise in your schedule. Instead, think

of your daily routine. Are there instances where you can include physical fitness into your plans?

If you walk your dog, consider picking up the pace by speed walking, jogging or simply extending the amount of time you enjoy the activity. When visiting the grocery store, park far away from the entrance for extra cardio and

a little strength training when you push the loaded cart back to your car.

## **INVEST IN YOURSELF**

Treat yourself to new workout clothes, exercise gadgets or equipment once you reach a fitness milestone. You will look forward to trying out your new belongings the next time you work out.

# Learn Chair Yoga

Looking for a unique way to stay in shape? How about yoga?

The American Osteopathic Association states that yoga is a relevant exercise that builds strength, awareness and harmony in both the mind and body. However, for seniors with limited mobility, many of the movements can be dangerous or impossible. Fortunately, fitness experts developed a form of workout conducted from the safety of a chair.

Chair yoga is an excellent way for older Americans to gain many of the traditional style's same health benefits. In addition to pain management, the exercises stretch muscles, lowers blood pressure, improves circulation and reduce stress and anxiety. One factor to keep in mind is that your yoga routine should not cause pain or discomfort.

If you find yourself unable to reach the range of motion as recommended, complete the movement only to where you are comfortable. As you improve your flexibility, these motions will become easier to achieve.

Check out how to gain the health benefits from your living room with these impactful workouts.

## SEATED MOUNTAIN

This pose will engage your core but requires perfect posture and a focus on breathing. First, take a deep breath while



sitting up straight and extending your spine. You want to keep your legs at a 90-degree angle, with your knees directly over your ankle.

As you exhale, push down in the chair with the lowest part of your tailbone and roll

your shoulders down your back. Suck your stomach in while breathing out and lift your toes to firmly drive the four corners of your feet into the floor.

## EAGLE ARMS

If you suffer from sore

joints, this exercise is a great way to create relaxation as it stabilizes your shoulders. From your chair, stretch your arms out to your sides as you inhale.

While you breathe out, bring them in front of you and swing your right arm

under your left. Grab your shoulders to mimic that you're hugging yourself.

Next, lift your elbows higher and exhale. Then, roll your shoulders down, relaxing them away from your ears and take a few breaths while holding this pose.



# Senior Fitness Icons

It's never too late to commit to a healthier lifestyle through physical activity.

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While it can be a struggle to get into the lifestyle, once you begin noticing the mental and external changes, it's hard to give it up. Just ask one of these superstar athletes covered by the American Association for Retired Persons for their remarkable fitness achievements in their golden years.

## **ROY ENGLERT**

Englert says he read a book about exercise being the key to health and longevity and took up running at 60. He got his start by running on a treadmill at his local fitness center in Virginia before entering marathon competitions. In July

2019, he set the world record for the 95-99 age group after completing a 42-minute 5K race at 97.

He wholesomely remembers his first attempts at running were simple laps around the basement, where he could barely complete a quarter-mile. It goes to show how much can be accomplished with perseverance and dedication.

## **MARIE NEAVES**

Neaves didn't commit to becoming physically active for the health benefits. Her venture began after facing devastating situations like the loss of her husband and mother and

learning her youngest child was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma all in the same year.

She said her exercise journey began because she needed a place where she didn't have to think.

In 2005, she signed up for the Delaware Senior Olympics, and she quickly earned incredible opportunities after stellar performances. She was invited to the National Senior Games in Palo Alto, California. She took home gold, silver and bronze medals in swimming.

## **DAVID KUCHERAWY**

Kucherawy faced a life-threatening heart blockage

in 2008. Doctors discovered that the main blood vessel carrying oxygen to his heart was 99% blocked. After repairing the issue, they warned him that if he didn't lose weight, eat better and exercise, the blockage would likely return.

By 2010, at the age of 58, Kucherawy lost 35 pounds and was able to stop taking heart medication. After getting involved in running, he soon began entering sprinting competitions. In 2017, he participated in the National Senior Games, where he took home the bronze in the 400-meter race, and his team won silver in the 4-by-100-meter relay.