

Family Health Centers Nutrition Program
Improving Health and Energy Through Fitness

One of the best ways to improve your health, energy and longevity is through daily activity and exercise. The U.S. 2005 exercise guidelines recommend moderate to vigorous exercise (*aerobic / cardiovascular*) most days of the week, that is, at least 5 days a week. 30 minutes a day will help manage your blood sugars, blood pressure and triglycerides and improve the health of your heart. 60 minutes a day is advised to maintain your current weight and 90 minutes a day is encouraged for weight loss. This may seem like a lot of time spent on exercise; however, it does not have to be done all at the same time. Whatever level of aerobic exercise you are getting now, try to increase it on a gradual basis. If it's been awhile since you have engaged in a regular exercise program, you may want to first check your health status with a physician. If you have physical disabilities, confer with a physical therapist to see what kind of exercise you can do safely and effectively.

In addition to aerobic exercise, two other important types need to be included. One is *strength* training 2-3 times a week so you can build muscle to maintain your strength and balance as you age. If you have no experience with strength training, it's best to take a class or have an experienced trainer teach you proper methods. Start with light weights and work up slowly; be sure to use a spotter when using heavy weights. It is not true that moderate strength training will make women too muscular. It will help you tone muscles, however 'spot reducing' is a myth. The third type of essential exercise is daily *stretching* to remain flexible and limber as you age.

Functional fitness allows you to:

- lift children and pets
- carry groceries and laundry
- take care of the house and garden
- run errands
- stand up, walk, and climb stairs more easily

Exercise for fitness and also to:

- relieve depression and anxiety
- improve sleep, osteoarthritis and HDL (good cholesterol)
- decrease risk of heart disease, diabetes, gallstones, osteoporosis, falls, diverticulosis, colon cancer, and enlarged prostate.

Exercise outdoors in the fresh air and sunshine when you can. If your schedule or the weather doesn't cooperate, find ways to exercise indoors. Lack of activity is the most common cause of physical decline in older people. Exercise is the best medicine for staying and feeling young! Listed below are suggestions for increasing exercise and activity in your daily life.

Aerobic / Cardiovascular

Walking (3-4 mph / 15-20 min/mile)
Running / Jogging
Bicycling
Stair Climbing
Swimming
Hiking
Martial Arts
Dancing
Tennis
Racquetball
Jumping (rope or trampoline)
Aerobic Dance / Exercise Class / Jazzercise
Basketball
Volleyball
Soccer
Baseball
Rowing
Skiing
Skating
Roller Blading

Stretching / Flexibility

Dance / Bar Stretches
T'ai Chi
Yoga
Qi gong (chi-kung)
Pilates

Push-ups
Yoga and Pilates may also include strength-training exercises

Daily Activities

Mowing the yard (with a push mower)
Raking leaves
Gardening
Yard work
Walking the golf course
Climbing stairs
Cleaning up litter
Chopping firewood
Brisk walk with the dog
Playing with children
Washing the car
Vacuuming / Housecleaning
Hanging clothes on the clothesline
Shoveling snow
Exercise while talking on the phone or watching TV (at least during the commercials, instead of going to the refrigerator)
Park farther from the entrance of stores
Use a pedometer and try to log 10,000 steps a day. (Purchase a good one in the \$20-40 range.)



Resources:

Local gym, spa or health club; YWCA / YMCA

Workout videos - can rent from library before deciding which ones to purchase

Fitness center at workplace

Track, swimming pool or tennis courts at local school or college

Websites (offers tips, booklets and videos)

www.nih.gov/nia click on Health Information click on Publications click on Healthy Aging

www.arthritis.org type 'exercise' in the keyword search

Books

Living With Exercise, Dr. Steven Blair
The Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research

Biomarkers, The Ten Determinants of Aging You Can Control Irwin Rosenberg, MD
(Simon & Schuster)

Strong Women Stay Young, Miriam E. Nelson, Ph.D.

Strong Women Stay Slim, Miriam E. Nelson, Ph.D.

Fit Over Forty, James M. Rippe, M.D.

The Life We Are Given, Michael Murphy and George Leonard (Tarcher / Putnam)

Stopping the Clock, Ronald Klatz, D.O., president of the Academy of Anti-Aging
Medicine

Exercise for Osteoporosis, Diane Daniels

Growing Stronger: Strength Training for Older Adults

www.tuftsbooks.com (973-579-3760)

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