



Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity across the Life Span

Volume 12, Issue 2

The Healthy Journey

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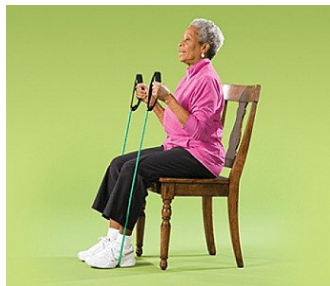
Winter Health & Wellness

By Allison Udris M.S. LCPC

Why is exercise important?

Active people generally live longer. Active people also have lower risks for chronic disease. Exercise can prevent many health problems related to aging. Exercise has immediate and long-term health benefits. Activity on one day can improve your sleep quality, reduce your feelings of anxiety, and lower your blood pressure. Regular exercise may benefit your health.

Brain health. Regular exercise reduces the risk of developing dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. It can also improve memory.



Heart health. Regular exercise reduces the risk of developing heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. Exercise reduces cholesterol and blood pressure levels.

Mental health. Regular exercise reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety. Exercise, especially when done in nature, has mood boosting effects.

Cancer prevention. Exercise reduces the risk of developing several types of cancers, including breast, kidney, lung, and stomach cancers.

Pain management. Staying active can reduce chronic pain. Exercise helps with arthritis and rheumatic conditions that affect joints by decreasing inflammation in the body. Regular exercise can regulate blood sugar levels, leading to a decrease in nerve damage.

Balance & strength. Regular exercise helps maintain bone density. Exercise strengthens muscles and improves balance, reducing the risk of painful falls and bone fractures.

How much exercise do I need?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise each week. This means exercising for at least 30 minutes a day for at least 5 days a week. Examples of moderate-intensity exercises include brisk walking, housework (sweeping the floor or vacuuming), yard work (pushing a lawn mower, raking leaves, shoveling snow), dancing, and bicycling.

This may seem difficult to do if you have not exercised in a long time. Small amounts of physical activity are better than no exercise. You may want to start with short walks and gradually increase your activity every day until you reach at least 30 minutes per day. You don’t need to break a sweat to benefit from exercise. For example, low impact exercises such as gentle stretching or resistance band exercises benefit your health tremendously. To read more about the CDC’s recommendations for physical activity, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/index.htm>.

What kind of exercise do I need?

Flexibility. Flexibility exercises include stretching and yoga. These exercises are especially helpful for people with joint stiffness, arthritis, or chronic pain. Doing flexibility exercises regularly can ease the movements of your joints such as your elbows, wrists, and knees. This allows you to keep doing everyday routines and activities as you age.

Strength. Strength exercises include working with resistance bands and lifting weights. If you do not have weights at home, you can lift water bottles or canned goods instead. Strength training improves muscle

Contents

Winter Health & Wellness	1
Tax season reminders.....	3
Government-issued mobile phones	3

mass, which is important for balance and preventing falls. Strength exercises maintain bone density, which reduces the risk of fractures. Strength exercises improve functional movement, which may prevent you from relying on assistive devices like walkers or canes.



Aerobic. Walking, bicycling, and swimming are joint friendly, low-impact aerobic exercises. Aerobic exercise increases your heart rate and oxygen intake. As this happens, increased blood circulation in your body brings nutrients to your organs. During aerobic exercise, you are likely to break a sweat.

Pain prevention and exercise

If you suffer from chronic pain, or if you have not exercised in a long time, you may worry about pain during exercise. There are many ways to prevent pain while staying active. Here are some tips.

- Drink plenty of water before and after exercise. Dehydration leads to muscle cramps.
- Wear comfortable shoes and socks to avoid blisters and foot pain.
- If you are diabetic, check your blood sugar before exercising. If your blood sugar is below 100 mg/dL, have a light snack before any physical activity to avoid feeling shaky or weak. If your blood sugar is above 240mg/dL, your blood sugar may be too high to exercise safely. Exercising when your blood sugar is under control can help you avoid discomfort associated with exercise.
- Take breaks. Pushing yourself to do exercises that are too intense can cause injury. Rest days are encouraged so your body can recover after exercise.
- Warm up before you exercise. Gentle stretching can warm up your muscles and help prevent injuries during exercise.

Guided fitness routines

Want to learn new exercises? Need someone to guide you through a workout? Here are some resources.

- The Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks offers activities and sports for adults 65+. While in-person programs are limited during COVID-19, virtual programs are readily available on the following website. <https://bcrp.baltimorecity.gov/virtual-rec>.
- Do you have Amazon Prime? Netflix? Cable On-Demand services? If so, you have access to fitness videos that you can watch on your TV.
- YouTube is an excellent resource for free fitness videos. Try the following.
 - Silver Sneakers YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRp-32Yi0KC2YMgHlg6mTag>
 - Senior Fitness - Seated Resistance Band Workout for Beginners <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xSj2KOWHs8>
- Senior Fitness - Standing Resistance Bands Workout <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrBsAEXUN5k>

Boosting immune function

Winter is cold and flu season. In addition, COVID-19 poses a health risk for everyone. These behaviors can prevent illness and boost your immune function.

- Avoid smoking
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Get adequate sleep
- Minimize stress
- Wash your hands frequently
- Stay 6 feet apart from others
- Wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth
- Get a flu shot and make sure your immunizations are up to date

Nutrition tips

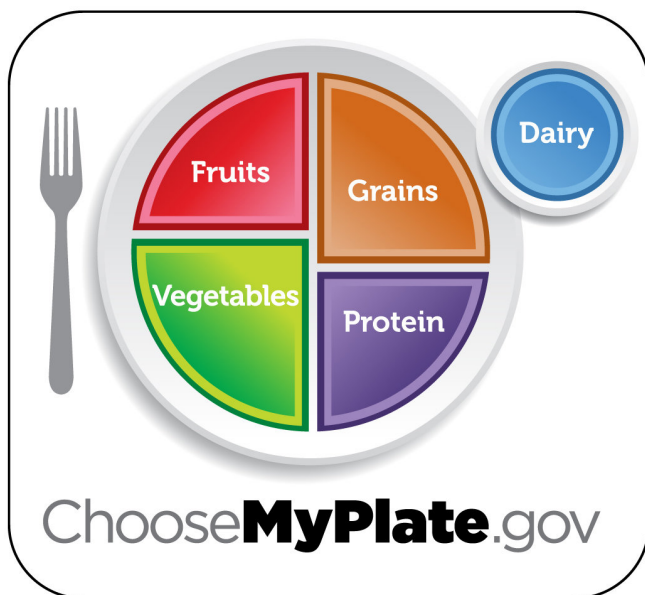
The Center for Nutrition Policy & Promotion at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) aims to improve nutrition for Americans. The USDA created MyPlate to help people focus on food variety, portion size, and nutrition.

According to MyPlate, try to fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables can be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried, and may be whole, cut-up, mashed, or pureed. Fill the rest of your plate with grains and protein. Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley, or another cereal grain is a grain product. Foods made from meat, poultry,

seafood, beans and peas, eggs, soy products, nuts, and seeds are considered types of protein.

Here are some healthy eating tips from MyPlate.

- Find quick and easy ways to include produce in your meals. Frozen vegetables are healthy, affordable, and simple to prepare.
- Choose whole grains whenever possible. Whole grains provide more nutrients and fiber than refined grains. Look for the words “100% whole grain” or “100% whole wheat” on food labels.
- When choosing meats, look for lean cuts. Trim or drain fat from meat or remove poultry skin to avoid excess fat.
- Experiment with different cooking techniques. Try baking, roasting, broiling, or grilling rather than frying.



Please visit <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/> to learn more about MyPlate. This website has several free resources to help you establish healthy eating habits.

Healthy food swaps

Try one of these food swaps next time you feel hungry. You can still satisfy cravings and feel full by substituting with healthier, nutrient-dense options.

- Instead of sugary cereal, try oatmeal.
- Instead of chips, try a handful of nuts.
- Instead of white bread, try whole grain.
- Instead of soda, try sparkling water or tea.
- Instead of candy, try fresh fruit.
- Instead of extra salt, try flavorful spices, herbs, or low-sodium seasonings.

Tax season reminders

April 15, 2021 is the filing deadline for 2020 tax returns. In addition to the filing deadline, things to remember about taxes include the earned income tax credit for low and moderate income workers. Also, unemployment benefits are taxable. You should receive a Form 1099-G if you qualified for unemployment income.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program helps people submit tax forms and claim tax credits. VITA sites offer free tax preparation by volunteers trained and certified by the IRS. There are eligibility requirements for assistance, but VITA is generally available to people who earn \$57,000 or less annually. Visit <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-qualifying-taxpayers> to learn about free tax help through the VITA program.

In 2020, VITA is partnering with Get Your Refund to offer free, digital tax preparation. Visit <https://www.getyourrefund.org/en> to learn more about the program. You can upload your tax documents and speak to a volunteer virtually, who will help you prepare your return.

For more information on IRS filing deadlines, visit <https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/info-2021/irs-deadlines.html>.

Government-issued mobile phones

Do you struggle to pay your monthly phone bill? Do you need a phone? You may be eligible for federal Lifeline Assistance. Lifeline is a government assistance program that provides discounts on phone service for qualifying consumers.

Assurance Wireless is a federal Lifeline Assistance program that offers eligible consumers a free phone and unlimited data, texting, and minutes. This program offers one account per household. You may qualify for this program if you have a limited household income, or if you are on certain assistance programs such as SNAP or Medicaid.

To learn more about whether you qualify for this program, visit <https://www.assurancewireless.com/> or <https://www.fcc.gov/general/lifeline-program-low-income-consumers>. You may also call Assurance Wireless at 1-888 321-5880.

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Newsletter for the HANDLS community

The purpose of this study is to learn about changes in health over time. Using our medical research vehicles, we want to study as many people with different backgrounds as we can. We want this study to help us understand healthy aging by examining the influences of different backgrounds on changes in health over time. The information we gather will help improve health and prevent disabilities. Our goal is to gather information to improve health and prevent disabilities for people of all backgrounds, particularly in minority communities and communities with limited resources.

For information about our study call 877-677-9538 or visit our website <https://handls.nih.gov>.