



Preventing falls through fitness

The fear of falling is unfortunately a vicious cycle: once you experience a fall, you develop a fear of falling, which may lead you to limit your activities. Limiting your activities actually reduces your mobility and physical fitness, which in turn increases your risk of falling. Although it seems counterintuitive, the best way to prevent a fall is by facing this fear head on.

In this guide, we'll be focusing on how you can **Prevent Falls through Fitness**. We've outlined some of the best balance training exercises out there and explained the benefits of the most popular exercises among seniors. Starting a new exercise routine can be daunting, but just remember that the sooner you start a new routine, the sooner you decrease your risk of falling.

<https://www.medicalguardian.com/medical-alert-blog/fitness/the-many-health-benefits-of-walking>



Combating Muscle Loss

Did you ever get the feeling that you might be shrinking? Your shoulders aren't as wide as they once were. Last time you checked, that jacket was just a little tighter around the arms. You aren't filling out that full-length mirror the way you used to. Well it may not just be your imagination.

If you're over the age of fifty, there's a good chance that you may actually be losing muscle. The phenomenon, known as sarcopenia, can begin as early as 20 years of age but will tend to gather in speed and intensity as we mature. At a certain juncture, the pace at which you lose muscle begins to eclipse the pace at which you gain it. According to an article in The Huffington Post, seniors are at risk of losing up to .4 pounds of muscle every year. To a certain extent, this process is simply a natural part of aging, but staying in shape as you age is all about adjustment and conditioning. As your body changes, so must the steps that you take to keep yourself fit.

Research on the subject of muscle loss tells us that exercise is the single most important defense that we have against shrinking. Doctors recommend a balance between regular strength or resistance training and steady aerobic exercise. This means that the healthy adult will find the time both for a daily 30 minute aerobic session and a few weight lifting sessions a week. The harder you work at it, the better you are likely to do not just at preventing muscle loss but at sustaining growth. In fact, a study published by WebMD indicates that adults over the age of 60 must exercise harder and more frequently than their younger counterparts in order to achieve the same level of muscle growth.

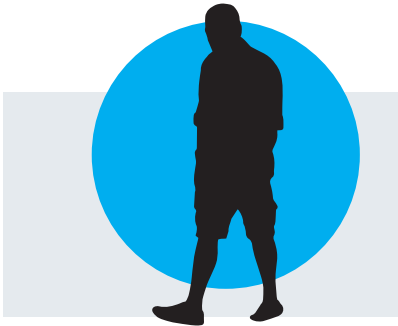
This is recommended with one cautionary note. Both weight-training and aerobic activity should be pursued within the scope of your own limitations. Don't overdo it. Regular exercise is essential but over-exertion may do more harm than good. Find your comfort level and stick to it.

<https://www.medicalguardian.com/medical-alert-blog/fitness/fitness-tips-to-combat-muscle-loss-as-you-age>

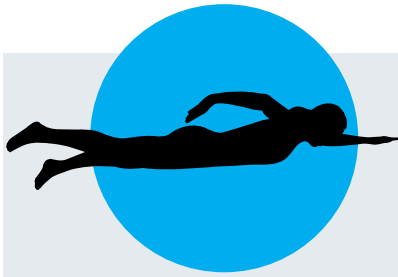


6 Best Exercises

We'll go into more detail about some of these exercises below, but here's a quick list of the top six exercises to combat muscle loss and get active:



Walking. While it might not seem like the most cardio-intensive workout, walking can actually go a long way when it comes to your overall heart health. It can improve your blood flow, make you stronger, and help to build your endurance (especially if you add in some big hills in your neighborhood). Walking is also a great activity to include a Fitness Buddy--you can socialize while you get into shape!



Swimming. Swimming is another great low-cardio workout that helps increase the strength of your heart and lungs, overall endurance and fitness level. Swimming can be a particularly helpful workout for people who suffer from Arthritis, knee problems, or are overweight. If you're new to the water, you can start by swimming laps with a kick board until you get more comfortable to test out your freestyle strokes.



Tai Chi. Tai chi has been used to improve balance and flexibility and has the added benefit of being a very peaceful, quiet exercise. Tai Chi is a series of fluid movements that emphasizes balance and relaxing your muscles. Research has shown that one hour of Tai Chi three times a week can greatly improve strength in your feet and toes, and also assist in increasing your balance and flexibility.

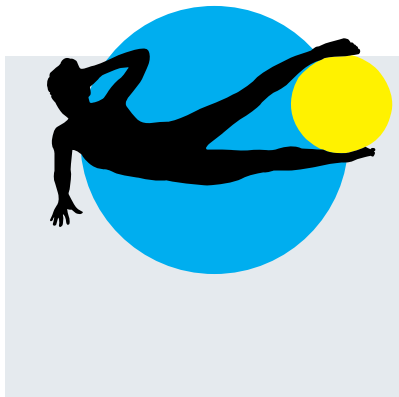




Cycling. One of our favorite pastimes as children also makes for a great senior activity! It improves cardiovascular fitness while being low impact on the knees, hips, ankles, and other joints. This fun activity, which can also be done with friends, helps to prevent obesity, colon cancer, breast cancer, type 2 diabetes, mild depression, hypertension and arthritis. It's a very practical exercise too, as it can serve as an alternate mode of transportation – just don't forget to wear a helmet!



Yoga. Yoga is a spiritual, mental, and physical discipline which has been around for centuries, originally as an Indian practice. Since the 20th century, Yoga has been a popular exercise and now has become quite trendy. Yoga is a gentle and non-competitive method of exercise that can work for you, at any age. Yoga has found to be beneficial for improving flexibility, depression, cholesterol levels, bone weakness, arthritis, blood pressure, diabetes, heart attack and stroke. As an added bonus, most yoga classes will have a meditation portion, which also can help you deal with stress and anxiety.



Pilates. Similar to Yoga, Pilates boasts the benefits of increased levels of strength, balance, flexibility, muscle tone, stamina, and well being. There are two types of Pilates classes to consider--Pilates Mat and Pilates Reformer. A Mat class is done on a mat, with no fancy equipment needed, aside from perhaps weights and a magic circle or exercise band. A Reformer class requires a large piece of specialty equipment and requires that you make private appointments for classes. The goal of both types of Pilates classes is to build your core muscles and increase flexibility.

<https://www.medicalguardian.com/medical-alert-blog/fitness/6-fitness-activities-to-try>



Building Better **Balance**

What does balance really mean? Balance is the state of having all of your body weight spread evenly in a position without losing control or falling over. Even when we do not realize it, we are balancing as we walk, as we stand and as we perform all of our day-to-day activities. Often times, we do not pay any mind to working on our balance as it is a very subconscious act. However, we tend to notice our balance as it begins to fail us whether it be from an accident, old age, or illness. In order to prevent a loss of balance, SparkPeople.com has provided us with three easy steps to improving and maintaining good balance:

- ✓ Try changing your center of gravity and narrowing your stance. The closer your legs and feet are together, the less support you have--decreasing your balance. While exercising, practice gradually bringing your legs closer together, narrowing your base of support and helping build balance. Great exercises to practice with? Bicep curls, shoulder raises, squats, or stability ball exercises.
- ✓ Challenge yourself by not just narrowing your stance, but by standing on one foot. Standing steadily and finding your center of gravity while standing on one foot can be challenging, but is great for improving your balance. Start by lifting one heel off the ground while doing upper body exercises. Eventually, you might be able to do a single leg squat or tree pose in yoga class.
- ✓ Vision plays an important role in maintaining a good sense of balance. Once you have mastered the previous two steps in improving your balance, try standing on one foot with your eyes closed. Start by locating one spot to focus on and when you are ready, close your eyes.

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Balance Exercises

A study published by researchers at the French Institute of Health and Medical Research found that exercises that improve balance can also help to prevent falls and injuries caused by falls in seniors. They were able to determine that those who participated in fall prevention exercise programs were about 37 percent less likely to be injured during a tumble, compared to non-exercising participants. Lead researcher Fabienne El-Khoury said that “reducing the risk of falling and improving protective responses during a fall may be an important and feasible means of preventing fractures and other serious injuries in the elderly.”

Here are some balance exercises you can do in the comfort of your own home:



1. Heel to Toe Walking – simple, and yet beneficial, heel to toe walking helps strengthen balance. Often used by law enforcement as a field sobriety test, this easy exercise is also a great way for seniors to build greater balance. a. Start by placing the heel of your right foot in front of your left toes. b. Then bring your left heel in front of your right toes. c. Repeat, walking in a straight line.



2. Standing on One Foot – this exercise is a fantastic way to increase balance. Start slowly, using a kitchen counter or chair back to help steady you. As your balance increases, leave your hand by your sides, or even raise them over your head. a. Place your hands on a chair back or counter as you raise one foot off the floor. b. Once balance is acquired, try lifting your hands off your support and hold for 15 – 20 seconds. c. Repeat with the other leg.



3. Knee Lifts – this exercise will help improve balance, as well as strengthen leg muscles. Decreased muscle strength in the legs is a major contributor to lessened mobility and balance in seniors. This exercise will help make your legs stronger – giving you greater confidence and balance. a. Hold onto a counter or chair back to steady yourself, and then raise one knee up and hold it at about waist level. b. Once you feel balanced, let go of your support and hold your knee up for 15 – 20 seconds. c. Repeat with the other knee.





4. Lunges – Holding onto the wall or table, place your right leg in front of the left and bend your knee so that your knee is directly over your ankle and your shoulders are in line with your hips. Then dip down and back up again. After about 2 minutes, switch your legs so that your left is in front of the right and repeat. The distance between your feet and how low you dip into the lunge is personal depending on your ability. Just like the leg raises, try to get to a place where you feel strong enough to eventually do these without the support of a wall or table.



5. Leg Raises – these exercises help strengthen your backside, lower back, and hips. Improved muscle quality will also improve balance. a. Hold onto the chair back of a tall heavy chair. Lift one leg and extend it behind you – a couple of inches to a foot off the floor. b. Hold your foot up for 10 – 15 seconds. c. Repeat on your other leg. d. Follow the same process for side leg raises – this time extending your leg to the side of your body.



6. Stepping – practicing stepping over objects increases balance and mimics real life situations like curbs and stairs. a. In a straight line across the floor, space small objects (foam cubes, books, or even soup cans) 12 – 16 inches apart. b. Carefully step over each object, extending your arms out for additional balance. c. Increase the difficulty of this exercise by sidestepping over the objects.



7. Side-Bend Stretch – Stand up straight and lean over to your right side, keeping your knees straight (but make sure you are not locking out your knees--keep them soft). Lift your left arm over your head, in line with your left ear. This is a great core stretch. Switch to repeat the stretch on the other side. Continue to stretch at 15 second intervals.



8. Invest in a Balance Ball – A balance ball is a great tool for at-home exercise. You can build core strength by simply sitting on the ball and moving your arms up and down--either alternating arms or moving both at the same time. Make sure that your hips are directly in line with your shoulders. Eventually you can build up to a point where you add in weights.

<https://www.medicalguardian.com/medical-alert-blog/fitness/balance-exercises-for-seniors>

<https://www.medicalguardian.com/medical-alert-blog/fitness/balance-training-is-proven-to-prevent-falls>





Yoga

Anyone at any age can do yoga! People often think that yoga is only for the young or the extremely flexible, but with the use of props, yoga is available to people of all different ages and body types. Chair Yoga makes most yoga poses more accessible for those unable to practice on the floor and has all the benefits of a traditional yoga practice.

Here are some of yoga's positive and friendly benefits:

- ✓ **Helps keep the body young.** In yoga philosophy, your age is told not by numbers but by the flexibility of your spine. The yoga practice helps maintain a healthy spine by lubricating discs, keeping length in the vertebral column, strengthening the muscles along the spine, and calling awareness to posture. Many cases of “hunchback” can be prevented by a yoga practice.
- ✓ **Supports and strengthens respiratory function.** The key to yoga practice is following, listening to, and being aware of the breath. Exercise is the largest factor in stalling the aging process as it relates to lungs, muscles & bones, and the cardiovascular system. Paying attention to the breath allows one to exercise smarter and for longer periods of time. Many yoga breathing practices aim to strengthen and expand the lungs and lung capacity.
- ✓ **Aids with balance.** The aging process has a tendency to bring hearing and vision losses along with it. These two impediments can throw off an individual's equilibrium and therefore, throw off balance, putting one at risk for falls. Although yoga will not restore hearing or sight fully, balancing poses in yoga can help restore the equilibrium. The use of a wall will help prevent injuries while practicing balance poses.
- ✓ **Increases or maintains bone density.** The aging process causes a loss of both bone mass and density. The idea of “use it or lose it” comes into play with bone density: the less stress put on bones, the quicker bone density loss occurs. Yoga is a safe and



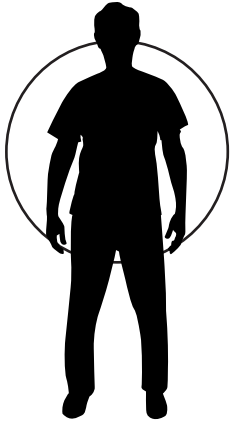
efficient way of responsibly stressing the muscles and bones. Even the most gentle yoga practice will help slow the loss of bone density.

☑ **Keeps mental performance strong.** Memory loss is a clear sign of aging. One way to slow this process is by engaging in new activities or hobbies that make you think and pay attention frequently. Most forms of exercise are done repetitively without thought; the yoga practice engages the mind by requiring constant attention to the breath and alignment.



Yoga/Pilates Fusion **Exercise Routine**

Here is a five- minute Yoga/Pilates routine you can do right in front of your mirror both morning and night:



Breathing: Start by planting your feet firmly into the ground (or bathroom rug, as it might be), parallel to one another. Begin “full yogic breathing” allowing the breath to filter into the body--low, middle, high--much like water fills a glass. As you exhale, imagine the breath being pushed out of the bottom of the glass first, so the out breath is also low, middle, high. Take a few more breaths this way. With each inhale, feel the crown of the head lifting effortlessly to the sky. With each exhale, reconnect to the abdomen and feel your feet root back down to the floor. See if you can close your eyes. Keep this same breathing style throughout the rest of the routine, spending roughly one minute on each body part.



Feet: Roll forward and back from the balls of your feet to your heels. Roll to the outer edge of your feet, and then roll to the inner edge. Lift up all ten toes off the ground, spread them and lay them back down.



Knees: With your hand on your hips, bend and straighten your knees, being sure to keep your kneecaps in alignment with your first and second toe. Keep your body upright. If you feel sturdy enough, go from bent knees all the way up to your tippy toes and see if you can balance.



Hips: Holding onto the sink or another steady surface, pick up your right leg, bend your knee and “churn your leg in your hip socket” in a clockwise direction. Reverse. Repeat on other leg.



Shoulders: Hike your shoulders up toward your ears and then roll them down your back in a circular motion. After 30 seconds, switch directions and roll your shoulders forward.



Arms: Bring your arms directly forward toward the wall in front of you and then circle the arms up, back, down and around, “churning the arm in the shoulder socket.” Reverse direction. Repeat on other arm.



Neck: Drop your chin to your chest and then drag your chin over towards your right shoulder. Raise your chin up and over towards your left side, like you are drawing a circle on the sky, and then drag across the left shoulder. After 30 seconds reverse direction.



Recover: Just as you began your practice, try closing your eyes, ground down through the feet, up through the crown of the head, and return to your breath. Notice how the body feels. Do you sense a difference?



Intention: Finally, invite the corners of the mouth to turn up into a little smile and give thanks to that which you are grateful for. This can be as simple as feeling grateful to yourself for taking the time to practice today. Namaste!

<https://www.medicalguardian.com/medical-alert-blog/fitness/yoga-will-keep-you-young>

<https://www.medicalguardian.com/medical-alert-blog/fitness/yoga-pilates-fusion-for-older-adults>





Tai Chi

In most yoga poses, one's back is arched and the joints are locked, but for those with joint or back pains, these stationary poses may be more difficult, which explains the recent rise in the popularity of another form of stretching: tai chi.

So what exactly is tai chi? Tai chi, or 'meditation in motion,' involves a set of fluid, slow movements while breathing deeply. Due to its low-impact and slow movements, tai chi has become increasingly popular among the elderly. There are several reasons why the elderly specifically benefit from this form of exercise:

- ✓ It involves gentle, circular movements that are never forced.
- ✓ Unlike in yoga, the muscles are relaxed and the joints are not bent or fully extended to their limit.
- ✓ Connective tissues in the body are not stretched.

Along with being a simple yet rewarding exercise, tai chi reduces one's fear of falling and improves balance by training one's proprioception, which is responsible for sensing the position of our bodies in space. Tai chi is also known to improve muscle strength, flexibility and aerobic conditioning, all of which can make it easier to recover from a fall.

Tai Chi Tips

Attend a tai chi class before trying these exercises on your own. A typical tai chi class includes a warm-up, practicing tai chi forms, or sets of movement, and qigong, which is translated as "breath work" that is similar to the 'cool down' stage after exercising. Whether you're in a class or at home, dress in comfortable clothes that do not restrict your movements and wear supportive shoes that won't slip.

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Ballroom Dancing

Dance like your health depends upon it because, according to a recent study, it actually may! According to research conducted in a Brazilian nursing home, seniors who participated in at least 30 minutes of dancing with instructor supervision three times a week for three months were 50% less likely than their sedentary counterparts to experience a fall or fall-related injury. An article in Best of Homecare confirms the study's findings, noting that dancing helps to improve the strength of your lower extremities, the steadiness of your gait and your general sense of balance.

Of course, there is an obvious benefit to dancing beyond its positive impact on your physical health. Namely, it can be a lot of fun. You might enjoy meeting some new people, hearing some of your favorite songs or simply discovering a low-intensity way of staying in shape. Researchers note that one of the best things about ballroom dancing is that the enjoyment factor makes it easy to stick with. As opposed to a running or strength-training routine, dancing is exercise that feels like recreation.

Dancing may not be the right activity for everybody. For those who already suffer from serious mobility limitations or who are at a heightened vulnerability of injury from excessive exertion, ballroom dancing may be too risky. Consult your physician for alternate ways of remaining active that fit your needs.

<https://www.medicalguardian.com/medical-alert-blog/fitness/ballroom-dancing-for-balance>

Play Catch

A new study conducted by the University of Illinois at Chicago found that playing catch can actually improve and restore the sense of balance in the elderly.

Lead researcher for the study, Alexander Aruin, and his colleagues examined two different groups for their research: healthy young men and older adults. They were all asked to perform a standing exercise of catching a medicine ball and were surprised to find that the exercise caused electrical currents in the leg muscles. The results were the same in both groups, the electrical currents in the legs showed improvements on anticipatory postural control and even bettered their ability in other tasks.

“There was a transfer effect,” said Aruin. “It tells us that — potentially — what people learn in the training might be helpful with other activities.” Like improving balance, for instance.

Having an older adult complete exercises that requires leg muscle movement will result in the body remembering its methods of restoring balance and ultimately reducing falls.

<https://www.medicalguardian.com/medical-alert-blog/fitness/want-to-improve-balance-play-catch>



Dive Into **Pool Exercises**

As we age, it becomes ever more important that we maintain a regular exercise routine. But the reality is, as we age, we also become more susceptible to injury and chronic discomfort due to our regular exercise routine. It's kind of a Catch-22. The wear-and-tear of everyday life and of your exercise routine can impact your joints and muscles. Sure, you can still climb the stairs or walk on a treadmill...but it does take your knees a little longer to bounce back from the strain.

So how can you find a balance between challenging yourself and knowing your limitations? Well one way is to take a dip! The swimming pool can offer a remarkable array of benefits to your health and wellbeing while offsetting some of the unwanted side-effects of your regular exercise routine. The following are just a few of the properties that make aquatic exercise such a fantastic way to stay in shape:

Low-Impact The National Swimming Pool Foundation points out that, contrary to jogging or aerobics, swimming is easy on your bones and joints. You can get a full-body workout in a pool without risking the sprains and fractures that become more commonplace with age. The pool also provides an especially excellent exercise setting for those who are susceptible to injury by fall. Think of the swimming pool as your very own zero-gravity gymnasium.

Strengthening Carefect points to a full spectrum of benefits to your bodily health. Swimming and other pool-based exercises lead to improved muscle tone, enhanced flexibility and a lower risk of chronic joint issues. A regular aquatic exercise routine can also improve balance, which means that you are a great deal less susceptible to injury on dry land.

Heart-Healthy Swimming engages every muscle in your body. Perhaps most important among these muscles is your heart. Discovery Health tells that a good aquatic exercise class provides you with a controlled environment for elevating your heart rate, burning calories and lowering your blood pressure. Not only that, but swimming can be a great way to relax, treat anxiety and generally relieve the burden that stress can place on your heart.





Therapeutic The pool also serves as an ideal environment for rehabilitation from surgery, injury or chronic condition. For seniors recovering from hip or knee surgery, swimming offers low-resistance strength training. This provides an excellent opportunity to build muscle around the vulnerable joint without risking further injury. As for those with chronic joint pain due to rheumatoid or osteoarthritis, Third Age says that there is no form of therapy proven to have greater beneficial properties than hydrotherapy. Particularly, exercise or activity in a heated pool can both reduce the symptoms of your condition and improve joint functionality.

Fun! Don't take this for granted. One of the hardest things about maintaining a regular exercise routine can be working up the energy just to show up every day. The key to remaining committed to your exercise routine is finding ways to enjoy it. Swimming is not only beneficial but it can also be social, recreational and generally invigorating. Nothing like meeting new people or splashing around with old friends to make you feel young again!

Listed below are five fun and simple water exercises:

1. Aqua Jogging

Aqua jogging is easy and beneficial to the body! Jogging back and forth will cause your heart rate to go up and stay up. If this is too challenging for your body, simply walk back and forth until your heart rate is up.

2. Flutter Kicking

Like aqua jogging, flutter kicking is another low-intensity cardio exercise. Kicking at a steady tempo that gets your heart rate up while not tiring out too quickly is the key here. You may do this exercise with a kick-board held in front of you or while holding one side of the pool with your head above water.

3. Leg Lifts

This particular exercise focuses on the muscles in the legs and improves balance. While standing in the pool, lift one leg out to the side and back down. Repeat this exercise until your leg tires, then switch legs.



4. Standing Water Push Ups

Water push-ups focus on strengthening arm, chest and shoulder muscles without putting too much pressure on the joints. Standing alongside the pool, place your hands shoulder width apart on the edge of the pool. Lean yourself in and push yourself out repeatedly until you feel tired.

5. Arm Curls

Having water weights is a plus for this exercise because it does offer more resistance, but they are not needed to perform the exercise. Hold the weights in front of you, palms facing out and curl the weights up and down as many times as you can.

Always speak to your doctor before performing any exercise, especially if you are on any medications. Know your limits and always bring a friend when working out in the water. Aqua exercises not only provide a safe way to improve flexibility, balance and bone strength, but it also offers a fun way of socializing with friends!

<https://www.medicalguardian.com/medical-alert-blog/fitness/work-it-out-in-the-pool>

<https://www.medicalguardian.com/medical-alert-blog/fitness/dive-into-pool-exercises>



Try These **Chair Exercises** At Home

A great workout option for seniors with limited mobility is chair exercises. Allowing for safe and low impact exercise, these simple movements can help you stay active and limber.

Ankle Rolls/Toe Taps

Helping to keep your joints lubricated and mobile, this exercise is simple and can be completed while sitting.

- ✓ Lift your toes off the ground and circle your ankle 360 degrees.
- ✓ Circle clockwise five times, then switch directions and circle counter-clockwise five times. Repeat on the other foot.
- ✓ Lift your toes up as far as you can. Then bring your toes down into a point. Repeat ten times, and then switch to the other foot.
- ✓ To add a balance component to these exercises, complete them while standing. Be sure to hold onto or to be near a stabilizing device while you complete these exercises.

Knee Lifts

Building muscle and maintaining flexibility, the knee lift can easily be performed from a chair.

- ✓ Sit on the edge of your chair and lift one knee up, at a 90-degree angle.
- ✓ Slowly bring the leg down, and then repeat ten times.
- ✓ Complete ten repetitions on the other leg.
- ✓ Make sure to complete the exercises in a slow and controlled manner.

Abdominal Twist

Help support your core with this simple exercise.

- ✓ Sitting on the edge of your chair, keep your feet planted on the ground.
- ✓ Using abdominal muscles, slowly twist your body to the left and then return to center.
- ✓ Then twist your body to the right, returning again to center.
- ✓ Complete ten repetitions to the right and left





Seated Row and Press

Great for toning arms, these exercises can be made more challenging by adding a light hand weight.

- ✓ Hold your arms out in front, making a fist with your hands.
- ✓ Pull your fist back toward your chest, making a rowing motion.
- ✓ Lift your fists from your chest up into the air, and then bring them back down to your chest.
- ✓ Repeat the arm row and up press ten times.

With many options for both strength training and cardio workouts, all performed from a chair, exercise is possible for everyone. Even seniors with limited mobility or those in wheelchairs can engage in daily exercise.

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What About When the **Weather Doesn't Cooperate?**

There's nothing quite like a brisk walk on a warm sunny day to get your body moving. Of course, they can't all be warm sunny days. Some days are blistering hot and others are freezing cold. Some days, it's bound to rain. And depending on where you live, you can probably also plan on a winter with plenty of ice and snow. So where does this leave you? Well, mostly indoors.

But when it comes to keeping up with your exercise routine, being indoors isn't a deal-breaker. In fact, there are all kinds of healthy, physically beneficial activities that you can do without ever leaving the comfort of a temperature-controlled environment.

Great Indoor Exercises

When it comes to indoor exercising, the only limitation is your own range of physical abilities. The Examiner offers a few suggestions for exercises you can do anywhere that you feel comfortable.

✅ **Low Impact Reps:** Physical activity does not have to be rigorous to be beneficial. You can maintain a healthy and active lifestyle by integrating some daily, low-impact stretches and exercises into your lifestyle. The Examiner suggests knee bends, arm rotations, hip whirls and walking in place as activities that you can do without ever leaving your own home.

✅ **Long Walks:** Your house isn't the only indoor location where you can enjoy the health benefits of low-impact exercise. For a long walk, try a visit to the mall, a department store or the supermarket. Not only do such indoor locations offer temperature and environmental controls, but most should also offer ample seating and a food court should you get a hankering for something tasty.

✅ **Classes:** Canoe.ca also points out that there are plenty of group classes that you can join that take place indoors and are designed to accommodate seniors. Join a yoga or dance class. Or enjoy the full-body benefits of swimming or water-aerobics. Whatever you do, the gym offers the benefits of a trainer, guidance and close-at-hand medical support.

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Get A Workout From Your **Daily Routine**

Don't have time to make it to the gym? Double up on your housework! Non-activity exercise thermogenesis, or NEAT, is the low-intensity physical activity that we engage in everyday, and it actually can burn calories. Keep reading to learn how much of everything you have to do in order for it to make a difference:

Cleaning the House: Dreading vacuuming the carpets or mopping the floors? Maybe you'd be more willing to clean if you knew you'd get a workout in the process...30 minutes of light housework can burn up to 95 calories and if you commit to cleaning for a full hour, you can burn almost 200 calories!

Gardening: Weeding, mowing the lawn, and planting new flowers can actually burn up to 200 calories for 30-45 minutes of work. Scientists at Kansas State University found that moderate physical activity through gardening can actually improve your mobility, strength, and endurance. Since you'll be outside in the sun for an extended period of time, you should be sure to apply sunscreen before you leave the house and wear a hat that keeps your face shaded.

Washing the Car: When the elements (or birds) have taken their toll on the exterior of your car, opting to wash it yourself can prove to be an excellent workout. A 30-minute car wash can burn about 120 calories. And if your grandchildren are around, it's a great way to get them active too!

Shoveling Snow: While many of us loved the promise of a winter wonderland as children, as adults the threat of snow means we'll have to shovel driveways and walkways. While just 15-20 minutes of this task can burn up to 200 calories, it's also important to protect your back by shifting your weight into your legs as you shovel.

Other easy ways to burn those calories? Taking the dog for a longer walk than usual, choose to take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator, or ride your bike to run local errands. Making these small changes to your daily routine can help you live a longer, fuller life. Not to mention that your house will be cleaner and your garden a bit brighter. It's a win-win situation!

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Remember: When Exercising, Exercise Caution

No matter where you exercise, safety must be a top priority. Don't over-exert yourself and respect your own limitations. Depending on these limitations, you should consider working out in the company of a friend, a caretaker or a trainer. Always make sure that assistance and medical help are nearby.

And before you start a new exercise routine, make sure you consult your physician or physical therapist. A professional can help you develop an exercise routine that makes sense for you.

OTHER

Incorporating strength exercises can improve the body's balance and flexibility while decreasing bone and muscle loss. Other benefits include increasing metabolism and cardiovascular health according to Chodzko-Zakio, PhD, head of department of kinesiology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. When a senior is physically fit, they also become independent and benefit from a better social life as well.

Best **Group Fitness Classes** for Seniors

One of the very best ways for seniors to stay active, healthy and happy is to remain engaged in regular exercise. But it can be challenging to remain engaged, motivated and committed to your routine. This is why signing up for group exercise classes can be a fantastic way to stay in shape. Knowing that your instructor and your classmates are expecting you can make for powerful encouragement. As an added bonus, this can also be a great way to socialize and make new friends. But which are the best group exercise classes for you? Well that depends on your physical range and your personal preference.

Balance Exercises According to Elder Gym, between 28% and 45% of seniors will suffer a fall on an annual basis. Such falls can lead to severe injury, sustained hospitalization or even fatality. This is why balance training is so important. Many retirement developments, community centers, gyms or rehabilitation facilities will offer group exercise classes comprised of low-impact balance training activities.

Like any skill, balance is one that is maintained and improved through practice. Therefore, find a group exercise class that employs strength training, endurance training and balance-based routines that can improve your ability to safely face everyday challenges like stair-climbing or getting into and out of the shower.

Swimming eHow points out that swimming is another great way to condition and prevent muscle loss. One of the great things about swimming is that it has significantly less impact on your joints than does exercising on dry land. Likewise, aquatic group exercise can engage all parts of your body without posing a major risk of strain or falling.





Many community centers and gyms offer instructional exercise classes that take advantage of these unique benefits. Beyond that, swimming can be a fun and refreshing way to take on your exercise routine without sacrificing any of the desired health benefits.

Walking Not all group exercises take place in the gym. Some activities are best pursued in a more colorful setting. eHow suggests that one of the easiest and most enjoyable ways for seniors to get together and exercise is to take a walk around the mall. Many senior communities provide regular bussing to area malls for this very reason.

Among the benefits of taking a low impact walk around the mall with some of your friends is the fact that the weather never changes. This is a safe, hospitable place for groups of seniors to stroll without being impacted by the elements or by excessive pedestrian traffic. Additionally, most malls are well-equipped with amenities for seniors including handicapped accommodations and strategically placed sitting areas. And of course, let's not forget the food court!

When it comes to group exercise, you will need to work within your level of comfort. As always, don't over-exert yourself. Likewise, always consult a physician before starting a new activity. But whatever you decide to do to stay in shape, find a good group of people to help you along.

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