

Stay Active Even When Feeling Frail



The more challenging life becomes, the more you can benefit from physical activity.

You are never too old to start being physically active. While it may or may not change the number of years you live, it will help you feel better overall; help maintain your ability to walk and perform personal care; and is the best way to prevent a fall.

As you approach 75 years of age or older, you can gain muscle strength, balance and endurance.

Incorporate Physical Activity in All You Do

DO It Yourself

Remember to say...I'd rather DO it myself! Participate as much as possible in all your personal care – bathing, dressing and walking.

Make it Fun

- Listen to music or an audiobook while walking. Walk with a friend or in a scenic area. Walk or roll to a nice destination (to get a cup of coffee or snack).
- Clean (e.g., dust and vacuum) the house or your room with music on... or just dance to your favorite songs!

Set Some Goals

Set goals that are meaningful and motivating to you! Include specific but measurable goals that you can achieve each week. Plan ahead for activity.



Manage Uncomfortable Sensations

Joint pain?

Try heat or ice and pain-relieving medication that does not make you sleepy prior to walking...then get moving to help the pain.

Fear?

Walk with someone – a friend or caregiver.

Short of breath?

Stop and rest for a few minutes and then start again.

Fatigue?

Start with short periods of activity at times of the day when you have the most energy.

Strength Training

It is never too late to build or rebuild muscle strength. This can help you keep doing your daily activities and reduce pain around joints.

What?

Lift or push something that feels heavy but does not cause pain.

*Ideas below.

How often?

2 or more days/ week

*Rest one day in between.

How hard?

Use something that feels heavy to you. When it becomes easy, increase the weight.

How much?

Start with 8-12 repetitions for each major muscle group. Repeat 1 to 3 times.

Strength Training Ideas:

If you don't own weights, examples of home items to use include a:

- Can of soup (16 ounces or 1 pound)
- Carton of milk (32 ounces or 2 pounds)
- Bag of rice (48 ounces or 3 pounds)
- Large carton of milk (64 ounces or 4 pounds)
- Stretch bands are good for pulling exercises. They come in very light, light, medium and harder tensions.

You can also use your bodyweight. For example, try a sit-to-stand exercise:

- Begin in a seated position with a chair against a wall, feet flat on the floor and shoulder width apart. Stand up.
- Gradually increase from 1 sit-to-stand exercise to 2, 3, 4, up to as much as 10 times. Then try and do this activity several times a day.

To stay safe and injury free:

- Be as active as your abilities allow....do for yourself rather than having others do it for you!
- Start slowly with light to medium effort.
- Gradually increase the intensity of your activity, such as standing for longer periods of time, walking up a hill or climbing stairs (instead of only on a flat surface).
- If you're in a wheelchair, propel using your arms rather than being pushed. It's a great way to increase your activity and independence.
- If you need a walker to feel safe on your feet, use it and stay tall! Balance exercises can also help you be more stable.

Aerobic Activity

Aerobic activity improves your energy level, increases your ability to do your own personal care activities, and allows you to walk to where you want to go without getting short of breath. When you do aerobic activity, your heart rate increases and your breathing gets faster – but it gets easier if you keep at it!

What?

Walking, going up stairs, doing laundry, vacuuming, dusting...

How often?

Daily

How hard?

Start at a comfortable pace

How much?

Start with 1 minute. Increase to 2. Gradually build up to 30 minutes over the day.

Remember: Bathing, dressing and walking to the bathroom or to get your meals, the mail, the laundry or a coffee, are all important basic ways to be physically active. Short minutes of activity add up throughout the day. For example, if you enjoy walking, you could go for three 10-minute walks each day.

Balance

Balance activities improve your ability to prevent a fall. The absolute best way to prevent a fall is to combine strengthening and balance activities.

Easy Balance Exercises

Single Foot Standing

- Stand on one foot while holding onto a sturdy surface like the sink. Count to 10.
- Try and lift one hand and then both hands. Switch to the other foot and do the same thing. Try this 3 times on each foot a few times a day.

Posture Perfect

- Stand with your back to a wall, holding on to a chair in front of you or the hands of your caregiver.
- Gently push your back into the wall so that your head, shoulders, your bottom and the backs of your heels are all touching the wall.
- Stand tall and hold this position for 30 seconds, letting go of any supports if possible. Repeat 3 times.

Toe and Heel Rises

- Stand at the kitchen counter or at a sturdy surface with your hands gently resting on top. Stand tall and look straight ahead with your feet a little closer than hip-width apart.
- Slowly bring your weight to your toes, lifting your heels off of the ground, so that you are standing on your tiptoes. Hold for 3 seconds and lower. Repeat 5 to 10 times.
- Next, lift your toes so that you are standing on your heels. Hold for 3 seconds and lower. Repeat 5 to 10 times.

Remember: To continue to improve your balance, do things that safely challenge you.

More Help

For additional information about being active go to www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/older_adults/.

Go to www.acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro to find an ACSM certified exercise professional near you.

Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.