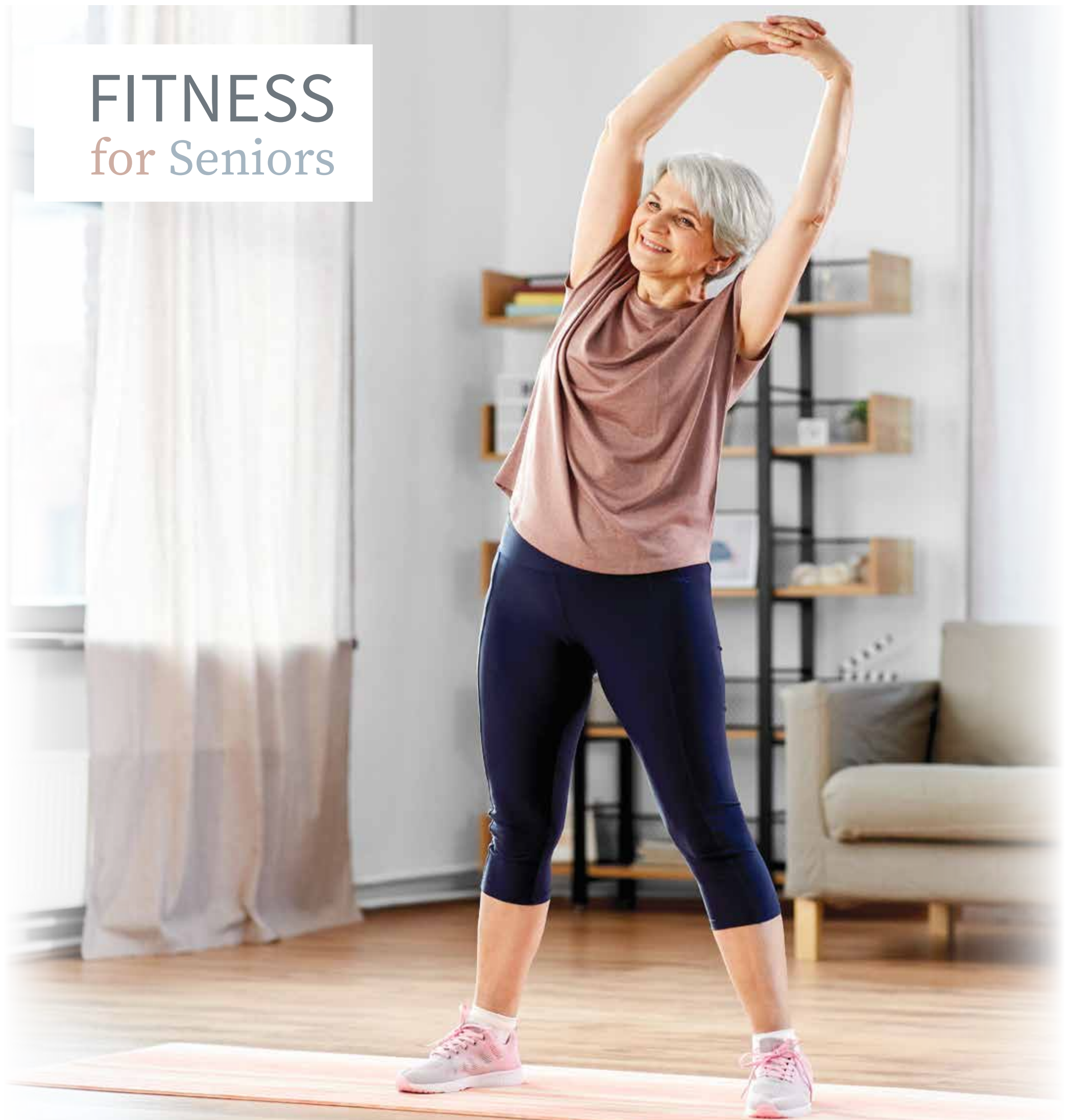


# FITNESS for Seniors





© ADOBE STOCK

# What Is Pickleball?

Even though it was first played in 1965 in the back yard of the families who created it, pickleball is catching on like wildfire today.

The sport is soaring in popularity, with nearly 70,000 courts nationwide. USA Pickleball boasts a membership of more than 60,000, coming from all levels and backgrounds, with a particular popularity among seniors.

Pickleball is a sport that combines elements of tennis, table tennis and badminton. It's played on a badminton-sized court with a modified tennis net. Players use solid paddles that are like table

tennis paddles but larger and a plastic ball with holes that are similar to those on a wiffle ball.

It's played to 11 points and must be won by two points. Serves are underhanded, below the waist. After the serve, each team must let the ball bounce once on their side before they can return it. There's a seven-foot area on each side of the net called the kitchen where it's illegal for players to volley the ball (hit it in the air). Faults

include hitting the ball out of bounds, hitting the ball into the net, stepping into the kitchen while volleying or hitting a volley out of the kitchen.

The game can be played with singles, but it's often played in doubles, resulting in a fun and highly social environment. Its easy-to-grasp rules make it particularly welcoming to beginners, and air-conditioned, indoor courts make it easy to play in all weather.

For seniors, it provides a great workout without as much wear and tear on joints. The paddle's lack of strings and the soft ball makes for a low-intensity volley

and serve with minimal stress on the tendons and muscles of the arms. The sport helps with hand-eye coordination, the Medical University of South Carolina says, and a couple of good games can help older players cultivate higher self-esteem and battle depression.

U.S. Senior Pickleball is an organization dedicated to promoting and supporting the sport for players over 50 and provides a community that helps players live actively. Members can receive a discount on tournament registrations and participate in the end-of-year Awards Program with more than \$20,000 worth of prizes.



# Recipes to Show Your Heart Love

Heart-healthy recipes don't have to be boring or flavorless.

Focus on improving your cardiovascular health with recipes that center fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and healthy fats. Try to limit sodium, unhealthy fats and added sugar.

**BLACK-EYED PEA, CORN AND RICE SALAD**  
Recipe is from the American Heart Association. Serves six.

- Ingredients**
- 2 15-ounce cans no-salt-added black-eyed peas, rinsed and drained
  - 1 15.25-ounce can no-salt-added whole kernel corn
  - 1 8.8-ounce pouch brown rice, cooked
  - 2 ribs of celery, chopped
  - 1 medium bell pepper, chopped
  - 1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped
  - 1 tablespoon dried parsley, crumbled
  - 2 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
  - 2 tablespoon vinegar, any type
  - 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
  - 1 tablespoon water
  - 1/8 teaspoon pepper

**Directions**

In a large bowl, toss together the black-eyed peas, corn, rice, celery and bell pepper. In a small bowl, whisk together the parsley, lemon juice, oil, water and pepper. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss to coat.



© ADOBE STOCK

**AIR-FRYER CRISPY (UN)FRIED CHICKEN**  
Recipe is from the American Heart Association. Serves four.

- Ingredients**
- 1/2 cup flour
  - 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
  - 2 teaspoons dried parsley, crumbled
  - 1/2 teaspoon ground oregano
  - 1/4 teaspoon pepper
  - 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
  - 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
  - 1/2 to 1 cup low-fat buttermilk
  - 1/2 tablespoon red hot-pepper sauce, or to taste
  - 1/3 cup finely crushed whole-grain crispbread or whole-grain crackers or panko

- 1/3 cup shredded or grated Parmesan cheese
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, visible fat removed, flattened to 1/4-inch thickness and patted dry
- Cooking spray

**Directions**

1. Preheat the air fryer to 390 degrees.
2. In a shallow dish, whisk together the flour, parsley, oregano, pepper and cayenne. In a separate shallow dish, whisk together the buttermilk and hot sauce. In a third shallow dish, stir together the crumbs and cheese. Set the dishes in a row, assembly-line fashion.
3. Dip the chicken in the flour, then the buttermilk, then the crumbs. Turn to coat in each dish and shake off any excess. Gently

press the chicken so the coating sticks. Place the chicken on a plate, cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes to four hours.

4. Lightly spray the chicken with cooking spray. Arrange in a single layer in the air fryer basket. Work in batches if you need to. Cook for 10-15 minutes, or until the chicken is no longer pink in the center and the top is golden brown. Turn once halfway through and spray again with cooking spray.

**CHOCOLATE NUT COOKIE IN A MUG**  
Recipe is from the American Heart Association. Makes one serving.

- Ingredients**
- 1 tablespoon trans-fat-free

- margarine
- 10 drops chocolate-flavored liquid stevia sweetener
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 tablespoon egg white
- 1 tablespoon chopped walnuts
- 1 tablespoon chopped pecans

**Directions**

1. Put the margarine in a small microwaveable mug. Microwave on high for 10 seconds or until melted. Stir in the sweetener and the cocoa powder. Add the flour and stir until well blended. Stir in the egg white and nuts.
2. Microwave on high for 45 seconds or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool for five minutes.



# Finding a Fitness Class

Exercise classes are great ways for seniors to get fit and socialize.

They provide opportunities for people to stay active and to stay connected to their communities. Here's how to find the right exercise class for you.

## LOCAL COMMUNITY AND SENIOR CENTERS

Community and senior centers frequently offer specialized exercise classes designed just for the needs of senior citizens. These are often free or low-cost classes featuring low-impact activities designed to be easy on the joints. Senior-focused classes are a great way to stay connected to others in your community, which can be critical to maintaining mental health and acuity.

If you're hesitant, consider visiting a community or senior center and watching a class before taking part. You can use your visit to ask questions about what services, fitness or otherwise, the center offers and how you can take advantage of your well-earned benefits.

## ONLINE PLATFORMS

If you can't get out as often as you'd like or there are no classes in your area, consider taking part in online classes through websites such as SilverSneakers, MyFitnessPal and others. Even though they're taken from the comfort of your own home, these classes, still



© ADOBE STOCK

targeted at seniors, offer the opportunity to make connections with others and build new or maintain existing social ties.

## FITNESS PROGRAMS

Speaking of SilverSneakers, it's one of many programs that

may be included with benefits you already have. If you have Medicare Advantage or any other qualifying plan, you may already have SilverSneakers at no additional charge.

SilverSneakers recommends a variety of classes, such as relaxation and mindfulness,

strength training, yoga and Pilates, cardio and more. Check your eligibility at [SilverSneakers.org](https://www.silversneakers.org).

For other programs, try asking your health care professionals for recommendations or checking with local libraries, universities, colleges

and councils on aging. Before starting any exercise program, speak with your health care professional to make sure you're cleared for physical activity. Try to choose classes that match your current physical abilities and any limitations you may have.



# Walking Away Poor Health

Hiking lets seniors be physically active and reconnect with nature and perhaps each other.

It's an exercise that strengthens the heart and improves circulation, works muscles and improves flexibility, increases bone density, improves cognitive function and more.

## GETTING STARTED HIKING

First, talk to your health care professional about how much physical exercise you can safely do. Once you get the go-ahead, start slowly with short, relatively flat trails. Look for gentle slopes, well-maintained surfaces and few obstacles. Invest in sturdy, comfortable shoes with good ankle support and a pair of hiking poles for added stability.

Before you hit the trail, hydrate and pack plenty of energy-boosting snacks and water. Tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back or, even better, take a friend with you.

## HIKING AND YOUR HEALTH

Hiking has a lot of advantages over other exercises, even low-impact ones. It can reduce the risk of heart disease by working your heart and circulatory system, alleviate joint pain and stiffness,



© ADOBE STOCK

reduce the risk of osteoporosis and fractures, improve memory and reaction time, improve balance and coordination, relieve stress, relieve depression and anxiety, foster a sense of community and much more. Also, it gets you out in the sunshine and enjoying nature's beauty.

## JOIN A HIKING GROUP

After a few good hikes, consider joining a hiking group to explore more of the great outdoors. Some hiking groups are just for seniors or they may be mixed, allowing you an opportunity to make new social connections. Look for groups near you online or ask local

community centers, churches or councils on aging for recommendations. Or consider starting your own.

Eventually, you may even explore hiking vacations, either exclusively for seniors or open to everyone. Non-profit organization Road Scholar offers more than 145

U.S. and international trips for people over the age of 50, including all-inclusive packages. For one price, you get all lodging and most meals, expert-led lectures and field trips, all gratuities paid, hands-on experiences and performances and more. They might even include airfare.



# Exercise to Improve Mood

Exercise can help fight stress and anxiety and, overall, improve the mood of anyone, but especially seniors.

Regular physical activity releases endorphins, enhancing your mood and helping your body regulate hormones such as cortisol, which can help give you a more positive mental outlook.

## PHYSICAL AND MENTAL BENEFITS

Of course there are lots of physical benefits to exercising, including helping seniors with balance and coordination, improving joint health and cardiovascular health. By helping your body feel better, you're working on your mind. Regular exercise can give you more confidence that you can still be active and productive. It can help you feel better about how you look.

Regular exercise helps your brain release endorphins, natural chemicals in the brain that can improve your mental well-being. Exercise helps you think about something other than your worries, breaking the cycle of depression and anxiety, and can help you meet new people.

## HOW TO GET STARTED

Don't make it more difficult than it needs to be. Find an activity or two you enjoy doing and, once you've cleared it



© ADOBE STOCK

with your health care professional, choose a time when you're most likely to follow through and give it a shot. Set reasonable goals, the Mayo Clinic says, and be realistic about what you're going to be

able to do. Slowly, over time, increase your goals along with your abilities.

Try not to think of exercise as a chore and, if you hit roadblocks, try to eliminate obstacles that keep you from

being successful. If you're lonely, ask a friend to join you or join a class to meet new people. Financially strapped? Walks around the neighborhood or a local park are free, and you may meet some new

families in the process.

Give yourself credit for every step in the right direction and try not to worry too much about skipping a day or not keeping up with your routine. Just try, try again.



# Finding Appropriate Footwear

Falls are a leading cause of injury for seniors, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

More than 14 million older adults report falling every year — that's about a quarter of all seniors. The thing is, most falls are preventable.

## COMFORT AND STABILITY

For seniors, safe footwear is footwear that is both comfortable and stable. Look for shoes with non-slip soles to keep traction on a variety of surfaces, reducing the risk of falls. Shoes should have a closed toe with a snug fit with laces or Velcro closures to keep them secure on the foot. This prevents falls from loose shoes.

Those with a preference for heels should look for a wide heel with a height of less than an inch to maintain good posture and balance. Enclosed heels have better support and stability than open heels.

## ON THE INSIDE

Insoles should be soft and cushioned to protect the small bones of the foot and reduce stress on joints. Seniors with arthritis, diabetes or other foot conditions should be especially protective of their feet and pay close attention to the insoles to make sure their foot is fully protected. The right arch support helps



© ADOBE STOCK

maintain foot alignment and reduces strain.

Look for shoes with breathable materials to allow for airflow and prevent moisture buildup. That will combat skin irritation and fungal infections, making for a healthier foot. Try to find a shoe with a

padded collar and tongues for extra comfort for sensitive feet.

## WHAT TO AVOID

Don't walk around barefoot or in socks and slippers, even inside the house. You will have no support for the foot

and will increase the risk of falls. Wear appropriate footwear for the weather, including proper boots for winter weather and rain boots to protect your feet in rain and mud.

Speak to your health care professional about your needs

when it comes to footwear. You could get an insole that will allow you to keep many of your favorite pairs of shoes in rotation. If you already use orthotics or braces, choose shoes that have a removable insole and plenty of room for your health devices.

# Exercise and Your Circulation

Exercise keeps more than just you moving. It works wonders for your circulatory system.

Aging changes the way the heart and blood vessels work and these changes, along with other health conditions, can lead to heart disease.

## WHAT DOES AGING AFFECT?

Aging changes several parts of your circulatory system, MedlinePlus says. Your heart comes with a natural pace-maker system that controls the heartbeat but, as you get older, some of the pathways develop fibrous tissues and fat deposits and this may result in a slightly slower heart rate. The heart wall may thicken and the amount of blood the heart can hold will decrease despite the fact the heart is bigger. The heart may fill more slowly. In the blood vessels, baroreceptors may become less sensitive and older people may become more prone to fainting when they stand. Capillary walls may thicken, causing a slower rate of exchange for nutrients and wastes. The main artery from the heart, the aorta, may become thicker, stiffer and less flexible, increasing blood pressure and making the heart work harder.

Some common problems resulting from these changes include angina, arrhythmias, atherosclerosis, congestive



© ADOBE STOCK

heart failure, coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, heart valve problems and strokes.

## FIXING THE PROBLEM

Not all these problems can be fixed; some are just the natural result of aging. But getting regular exercise can stave off some of the issues. Johns

Hopkins Medicine recommends three kinds of exercise to improve your circulatory health.

Aerobic exercise directly improves circulation, resulting in lower blood pressure and cardiac output. Try to get at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week, of brisk walking, running, swimming, cycling and

more. Resistance training can help reduce fat and create leaner muscle mass and even may help lower bad cholesterol. Look to get two nonconsecutive days per week of resistance training such as working out with free weights, using resistance bands or body weight exercises.

Stretching, flexibility and

balance are important for seniors looking to prevent falls and increase mobility. These exercises don't directly affect circulatory health, but they keep you free from pain and cramping and up on your feet. Try to stretch and work on stability and balance every day. Tai chi and yoga are great for building these skills.