



Fitness
for Seniors

Having Motivation Troubles?

Sometimes getting started on your healthier journey is the hardest part.

We're all aware of the advantages that physical activity offers seniors, both in terms of mental and physical health. But finding the motivation to maintain a consistent exercise routine can be a challenge. Thankfully, there are strategies to help us remain active as we grow older, even when it may be difficult to muster a positive outlook about working out.

MAKE IT ENJOYABLE

Following the same exercise routine can become monotonous after a while. Commit to keeping your workout sessions varied and enjoyable. Try diversifying your physical activities by switching to different types of movements. Just remember to include the four key components for seniors: strength, endurance, flexibility and balance.

MAKE IT SOCIAL

One effective approach to staying engaged is to monitor your progress and share it with friends or family. Write your exercise sessions, meals and weight loss achievements by hand or take advantage of new websites or mobile phone apps to record it all. Invite friends and loved ones to track their numbers, then join them for shared exercise routines. Invite your friends, children



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and grandchildren along for walks, a day at the pool, mini-golf or playing catch. It's a fun way to spend quality time together while improving your well-being.

DO SOMETHING DAILY

Think about new ways to integrate fitness into your daily life. You don't necessarily

need a gym or even a specific time allocated for exercise. Instead, look for small opportunities throughout the week. If you walk your dog, consider increasing your pace by speed walking or jogging – or simply extend the duration of your walk. When shopping, choose a parking spot farther from the entrance to add some extra

cardio to your routine. Use some canned goods for a bit of strength training while doing your regular grocery shopping.

MAKE IT SPECIAL

As you work toward improved fitness, establish goals and reward yourself for reaching milestones with

enjoyable experiences or by splurging on that special small item you saw at the store. You might find still more motivation if you gift yourself related items like new athletic attire, exercise gadgets or sports equipment. Who wouldn't be excited about using these new items during their next workout?



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Staying Safe While Exercising

Studies show exercising makes us happier and healthier, but there are dangers.

While people of any age are at risk of injury during an exercise routine, seniors are particularly vulnerable. That may be because of weakening bones and joints, unfamiliarity with new routines or simply overdoing it when starting a new exercise program. Manage your expectations – both as a beginner and as you continue to progress. You'll get stronger as you go, as

long as you pay close attention to common issues that may crop up in the meantime.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Discuss your health regimen with a doctor before beginning. Consulting with a trainer may make sense, because they can craft routines that will help keep you safe from pain, injuries or sprains. If you're headed outside, be aware of the dangers of the sun. The risk of heat-related issues is heightened with physical activity, so take time to rest in a shady place. Protect yourself from burns and lessen your risk of skin cancer by using

sunscreen with a rating of SPF 30 or more. Purchase a big, comfortable hat, and the right shoes.

STAY HYDRATED

Proper hydration when exercising is important for everyone, since we lose water at an increased rate through perspiration. Experts say as much as 75 percent of all Americans are living in a chronic state of dehydration. Imagine the increased risks if you're already dehydrated and then begin exercising! So, bring a water bottle along and take regular breaks to drink. Set a timer if you keep forgetting to hydrate along the way.

BE HEART SMART

Keep a close eye on your heart rate during and after any physical activity. Changes in the amount of oxygen sent to the body through your blood because of overexertion can lead to faintness, sudden exhaustion or even a heart attack. Be aware of conditions associated with aging like high blood pressure. They can become exacerbated by doing too much, particularly early in your routine. Consider using an activity tracker to more closely monitor how your heart is doing. It's OK to push yourself to do more, just not to the point of collapse. Building strength is a marathon, not a sprint.

Improving Cardiovascular Health

Focusing on this element of our well-being becomes more important as we age.

Doctors stress cardiovascular health at every age level, because a focused regimen isn't just helpful to our hearts and lungs. These exercises also improve the sharpness of our minds, help us manage weight, give us more energy, and can reduce the symptoms of anxiety and depression. Unfortunately, experts tell us that 75 percent of older Americans aren't sufficiently active.

That's why seniors are encouraged to take up exercises that improve balance and flexibility like aerobic activities and strength training. With the right exercise plan in place, older adults are seeing marked reductions in age-related morbidity – and they're healthier and happier during their golden years.

HEALTH IMPROVEMENTS

Regular cardio activity like walking can positively impact blood pressure, lipid profiles, diabetes management, osteoporosis, neurocognitive function and osteoarthritis. Participating in physical activity with others can also improve your emotional health, provide mental support and help reduce feelings of loneliness and depression.

If the weather isn't great, or if you simply prefer to exercise indoors, consider using treadmills or stationary



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exercise equipment. In time, they'll build the same cardiovascular strength as outdoor or gym workouts. Treadmills offer the flexibility to walk or jog at various inclines and speeds. Stationary bicycles can be adjusted for different resistance levels. Elliptical machines offer a low-impact option that elevates heart

rates while protecting those who suffer with joint discomfort.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Organize a walking club and watch as your wider friend group enjoys significant health improvements. Walking in groups can help with any trepidation you might be

feeling about using a new gym or public paths, since there is safety in numbers. Seniors who participate in these groups are more likely to maintain their new exercise routine, as they feel a sense of responsibility toward fellow members.

Whatever regimen you choose, start by dedicating

time each day toward enhancing your personal well-being. Before jumping into a new exercise routine, however, create a workout that you can build upon as your cardio levels increase. Start with smaller, enjoyable and effective exercises and then keep building toward positive results.

Try Chair Yoga

Looking for an innovative approach to maintain your physical fitness?

Yoga fosters strength, awareness and a balance between mind and body. For seniors who are experiencing limited mobility, however, many traditional poses may present a steep challenge – or even a serious health risk.

That's why fitness professionals developed chair yoga, a variant that accommodates these special needs. Chair yoga allows older adults to enjoy many of the same health benefits offered by conventional yoga, but while safely seated.

This form of yoga can aid in pain management while promoting muscle flexibility, improving circulation, lowering blood pressure and helping to alleviate anxiety and stress. Best of all, it's comfortable for seniors at any experience level.

If certain movements extend beyond your current range of motion, instructors will ask that you perform them to the extent that feels comfortable. As your flexibility improves, you will find these movements becoming increasingly easier to accomplish.

You can explore the potential health benefits of this effective workout for seniors in a group setting or from the comfort of your living room. Here's a look at two chair yoga poses recom-



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mended by experts.

EAGLE ARMS

The Eagle Arms stretch can provide relief for those experiencing muscle tension. From your seated position, extend your arms out to the sides as you inhale. When you exhale, bring your arms in front of you, intertwining your right

arm beneath your left. Position your hands to simulate a self-hug by gripping your shoulders. After establishing this grip, elevate your elbows and exhale once more. Relax your shoulders, moving them down and away from your ears, and take several deep breaths while holding this pose.

SEATED MOUNTAIN

To get the benefits of the Seated Mountain pose, you'll need to engage your core while maintaining optimal posture. Begin by taking a deep breath, making sure you are completely relaxed. Sit up straight and extend your spine. Keep your legs positioned at a right angle, with

your knees aligned directly above your ankles. As you exhale, gently press down into the chair with the lower part of your tailbone and roll your shoulders down and back. Draw your abdomen in as you breathe out and lift your toes, firmly grounding the four corners of your feet into the floor.

Why Water Is Important

As appetite and thirst diminish with age, we become susceptible to dehydration.

A doctor will tell you that water is essential for proper body function. But sometimes, you may not know you haven't had enough to drink. Your body composition may have changed over time, leaving you with less water than you once had. Seniors are also more likely to take medications that increase the risk of dehydration.

HOW MUCH DO YOU NEED?

Talk to your doctor or other medical professional about how much you should drink, since everyone has different needs. In general, however, experts say seniors should drink one-third of your body weight in fluid ounces daily. (So, if you weigh 150 pounds, you should drink 50 ounces of water per day.) Medical conditions and certain medications, including over-the-counter drugs, could impact these figures, as well.

Build hydration into your daily routine so that it becomes a habit. Take little sips of water throughout the day. If you're not used to drinking that much water, try infusing it with sliced fruit or, if you're not diabetic, juices. If you are diabetic, talk to a medical professional about safer



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ways to stay hydrated.

SYMPTOMS OF DEHYDRATION

Even a mild case of dehydration can lead to uncomfortable symptoms. One sign is less frequent urination and producing dark-colored or smelly urine. You may feel tired or weak,

experience dizziness and headaches or find that you're more irritable than usual. You might experience dry mouth, confusion or muscle cramps. Dehydration symptoms can easily lead to falls and more serious injuries, so pay close attention to these early symptoms.

STAYING HYDRATED

Keep water with you all the time. Stop by the store and pick up a refillable bottle, since filling stations are frequently built into public places. If you have trouble drinking fluids, include water-rich foods in your diet such as tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce,

watermelon and celery. Add foods such as soups and broths, provided you monitor your salt intake. Avoid caffeinated beverages such as tea and coffee. Caffeine is a diuretic, meaning you'll go to the restroom more often and lose fluids your body needs to stay healthy.

Dealing with Arthritis

This growing problem often affects our ability to get the exercise we need.

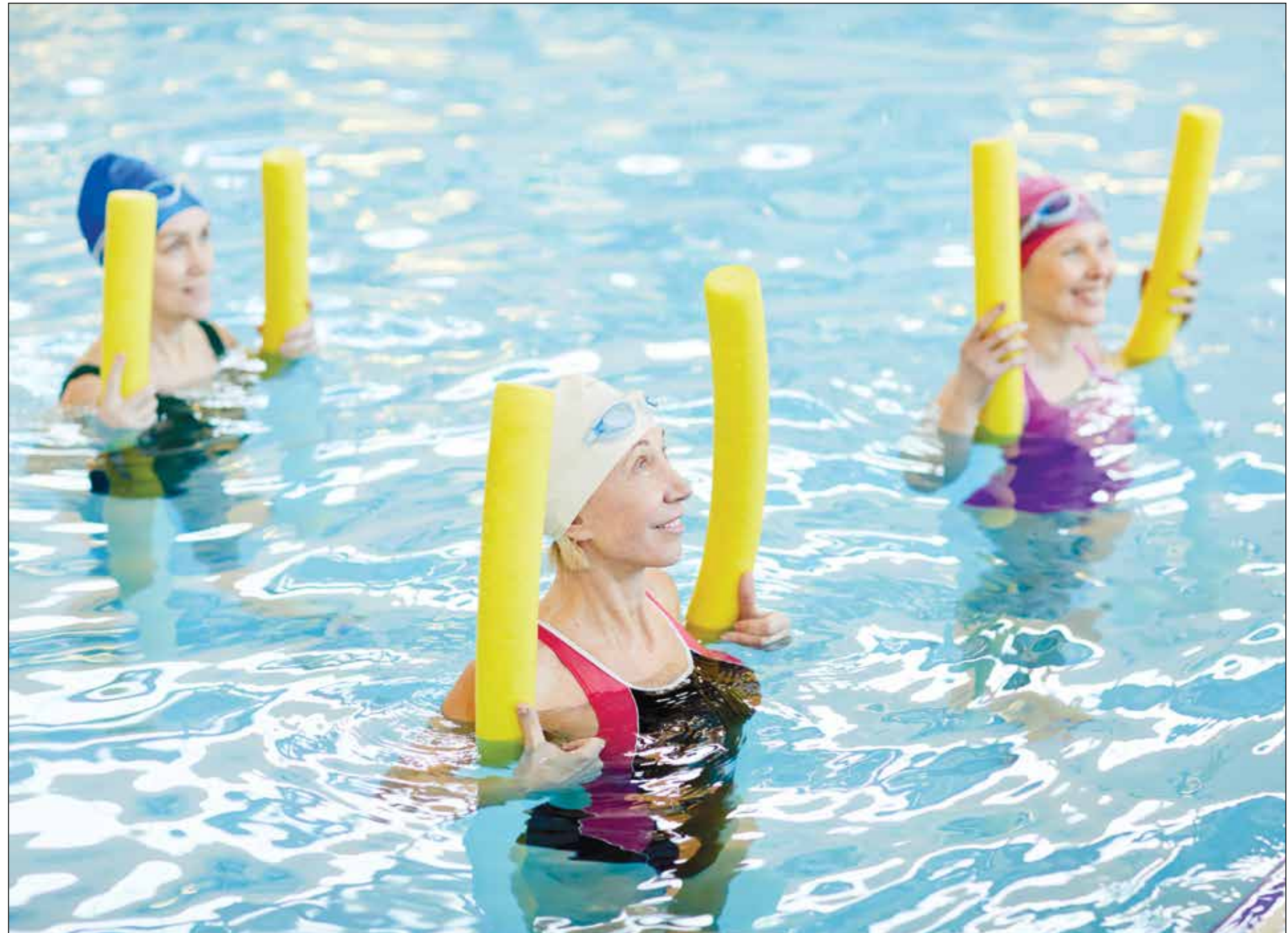
Approximately 54 million people in the United States are affected by arthritis, and nearly half of them report experiencing various limitations in their daily activities. At the same time, more than 25 percent of adults with arthritis report experiencing severe joint pain. That can make it very difficult to complete everyday activities, much less maintain an active lifestyle.

DIFFERENT TYPES

Arthritis manifests through various symptoms including pain, joint stiffness, aching and swelling. There are more than 100 recognized types of arthritis. Most of them primarily impact the joints. Osteoarthritis is the most prevalent form of arthritis, followed by other types such as gout, rheumatoid arthritis and lupus.

Individuals suffering from inflammatory arthritis may experience additional complications from other illnesses, often due to a weakened immune system caused by the arthritis itself or by the medications prescribed for its management.

It's possible for people to have multiple forms of arthritis simultaneously, and early diagnosis and treatment are essential for all types. Diagnosis typically involves a detailed



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medical history review, the use of X-rays and blood tests and a physical examination.

WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT

As difficult as they may be, at least initially, physical activities such as walking, swimming or biking have been shown to help alleviate arthritis pain. They also enhance overall mood and quality of

life.

Several programs have been specifically developed to help people suffering from arthritis get back on track. Over the years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended the Arthritis Foundation Aquatic Program, EnhanceFitness, Active Living Everyday, Walk with Ease-Group and Fit & Strong!,

among others. They can help arthritis sufferers return to regular physical activity, which is essential for maintaining a healthy weight. In turn, that significantly decreases their risk of developing osteoarthritis, especially in the hips, knees and ankles.

Always consult with your healthcare provider before

beginning any new exercise regimen. That's particularly important if you are dealing with inflammatory arthritis, since early treatment and effective management of the condition are so crucial. If you experience symptoms like stabbing pain, lengthy discomfort or worsening pain at night, please seek medical advice.

Focus on Balance

More than a quarter of seniors suffer a fall annually, with sometimes serious consequences.

Anyone is susceptible to a stumble and fall. But these accidents pose more significant risks as we age. Each year, more than 3 million older Americans receive treatment in emergency departments for fall-related injuries.

INCREASED RISK FACTORS

Several factors contribute to the heightened risk of falls among seniors. Age-related declines in vision and foot sensation can impact stability, while issues in the inner ear can lead to balance problems. Adverse effects from medications, inappropriate footwear and fluctuations in blood pressure may also increase the likelihood of a fall. Joint pain, eye or ear disorders and shortness of breath can be key indicators for potential falls, as well.

FALL PREVENTION

Unfortunately, many older adults change their lifestyles simply because they're afraid of falling. They may avoid walking long distances, shopping or certain social activities in the hopes of keeping themselves safe. But being inactive actually increases the chances of a fall. To help mitigate this



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risk, add exercises that improve balance and strength to your everyday activity. Any form of exercise when you're moving around will make a huge difference.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

Before starting any new exercise program, however, it's important to consult with a healthcare professional.

They'll make key exercise recommendations before clearing you for increased activity. Your doctor takes into account any prescription medications, your history of injury and all related health conditions. In certain instances, they might even adjust your prescriptions. Next, consider consulting with a trainer who can tailor a regimen based on

your doctor's guidance.

GETTING STARTED

Simple balance routines provide a great defense against falls by strengthening your core. Walking, swimming and jogging are some of the easiest, most convenient balance exercises — and they help with coordination, too. Easier weight-bearing activities like

climbing stairs or walking can slow down osteoporosis, an arthritic disease that weakens your bones. You can try the Sitting to Standing exercise, which promotes stability. Leg raises, done from behind a chair, will strengthen your hips and thighs. Walking heel to toe or standing on one foot helps, too. Even small changes can make a big impact.