For those who aren’t fitness fanatics, getting back in shape is a goal to strive for. Though rates of overweight and obesity are high, society has also grown increasingly health-conscious in the last 10-20 years, as the growing number of gyms and other fitness centers can attest.

Still, for those hoping to shed a few extra pounds, the first step toward doing so can be the hardest. Many instantly think of the oft-intimidating nature of the local gym, where muscular fitness enthusiasts dominate the landscape. However, getting fit does not have to include weight training. There are a host of other exercise options that can lead to very positive results.

- **Spinning.** Spinning is a popular and valuable alternative exercise option. However, because it can be so demanding, spinning can be a tough routine for those making a lifestyle change. Once you’ve gotten into an exercise groove, spinning might be something to explore. Often set to aggressive, pulsating music, spinning involves riding a stationary bike through demanding courses featuring hills and other difficult terrain.

- **Aqua aerobics.** For those who enjoy time in the pool, see if your gym offers an aqua aerobics class. This might not be as readily available at most gyms as spinning classes are, as lots of gyms don’t even have pools. For those who love swimming, look for a gym that does have a pool, and chances are, that gym will offer some derivation of aqua aerobics which consists of intense cardio movements mixed with some strength training. The chief benefit of a good aqua aerobics workout is that it will work all your muscle groups with low impact on joints – making it ideal for seniors.

- **Pilates.** The popularity of pilates classes is now so great that many gyms offer classes several times per day. Not unlike yoga, pilates is both a physical and mental exercise. The exercises themselves can be quite demanding, focusing on stretching and breathing that strengthens the abdominal core.

- **Abdominals.** Few people look at their abs and don’t think they could use some work. That said, nearly every gym offers a class focusing strictly on abdominal exercises. These usually range anywhere between 15 and 30 minutes in length. Anything longer than that might cause painful and unnecessary muscle strain, so beware of ab classes that might be longer than 30 minutes, especially if you’ve only recently gotten back into exercise.

- **Fusion.** For those who subscribe to the idiom that “variety is the spice of life,” fusion classes (also known as total body conditioning) classes could be the perfect fit. That’s because such classes are a combination of other classes. Because they combine so many different elements, these classes tend to run a little longer in length, often times exceeding an hour in length. The benefit of these is that they build up your cardiovascular as well as muscular strength.

- **Yoga.** Arguably no alternative exercise class is more widely known than yoga. A centuries-old Hindu discipline aimed at promoting control over the body and mind, yoga classes are offered at nearly every gym or fitness center across the country. Much of yoga is concerned with helping you become stronger, more balanced, focused, and flexible. If you’re looking for a non-competitive environment where you can move at your own pace, this might be the best workout program for you.
According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), exercise and physical activity are some of the best things older adults can do to stay healthy. Even moderate exercise can improve the health of those who are frail or who have age-related diseases. Some seniors are concerned that physical activity or exercise may be too strenuous or may do them more harm than good. In fact, it’s an inactive lifestyle that proves to do more harm than exercise does.

Without physical activity, older people tend to grow weaker in four areas important for staying healthy and independent: strength, balance, flexibility, and endurance. The NIH maintains that:

- Increasing strength and endurance make it easier to climb stairs and carry groceries.
- Improving balance helps prevent falls.
- Being more flexible may speed recovery from injuries.
- Exercising regularly can also have a positive impact on the immune system, blood pressure, cardiovascular system and it can decrease the risk of heart disease and help with depression or anxiety.

The American Senior Fitness Association has some recommendations for those wanting to start a fitness program:

- Get medical clearance to exercise.
- Don’t exercise if you are injured, sick, or running a temperature.
- Always warm up and always cool down.
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise.
- Avoid heavy meals for about two hours before energetic exercise.
- If fatigue and/or discomfort last longer than one or two hours after exercising, cut back the next day but don’t stop completely. Comfort ranges can change daily, so don’t get discouraged if you can’t do the same amount of exercise as you did the day before.
- Concentrate on exercises that improve and maintain your range of motion, lubricate the joints and keep muscles flexible. Everyday activities will be easier to carry out and you’ll have less pain, too.

Stop exercise and consult your physician immediately if you experience any of the following:
- chest pain or tightness in the chest, neck or throat
- considerable difficulty breathing
- abnormal heart rhythm; nausea;
- dizziness, light headedness, or visual
- interruption
- excessive cold sweat
- extreme or lasting weakness or fatigue

For a good, overall exercise program, consider tai chi. Tai chi is a self-paced system of gentle physical exercise. It involves standing and performing a series of movements in a slow, graceful way. Each movement smoothly flows into the next. Studies suggest that tai chi may improve balance and knee joint stability, both of which help balance. Staying active does the body and the mind a world of good. Find exercise and activities that you enjoy and you’ll be able to stick with it and improve your quality of life.

The Importance of Senior Fitness

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Healthy Living
Mohammad Khan, R.Ph.

With today’s busy lifestyle, healthy living is not something that comes easily. With a little planning, living a healthy lifestyle can become a part of your daily routine. Here are 10 quick tips to get you started:

1. Eat breakfast every morning. Studies have shown that breakfast eaters have leaner bodies and a lower cholesterol count.
2. Drink plenty of water. It is suggested that you drink eight 8 oz. glasses of water per day.
3. Exercise often. Exercise at least 30 minutes a day, five times a week.
4. Get plenty of sleep. Sleep is vital to good health, as well as mental and emotional well-being.
5. Protect your skin. Use sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher, and avoid sun exposure between 10am and 4pm.
6. Practice good oral hygiene. Brush at least twice daily, and floss every day.
7. Maintain good mental health. Take up new hobbies, volunteer and be social.
8. Eat healthy. Eat a variety of foods and limit sugars, salt and trans fat.
9. Be a smart snacker. Choose healthy alternatives such as yogurt, carrot sticks and nuts.
10. Maintain a healthy weight. Remove skin from poultry, cook with egg whites and drink skim milk.

To set healthy goals, consult with your doctor and Medicine Shoppe pharmacist. We’re always glad to help.

This article is intended to provide information on health-related matters. The ideas expressed in this article cannot be used to diagnose or treat individual health problems and should not be taken as medical advice or instructions. We urge you to consult a health professional before taking any action based upon the information in this article.

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Life expectancy has grown dramatically over the last century, but not all those living longer now are living well. The survey “Growing Old in America: The Health and Retirement Study” (HRS) sponsored by the National Institute on Aging, found some compelling insights into the health of older Americans.

* Less than half of HRS participants aged 55 to 64 said they are in very good or excellent health.
* Only about one quarter of participants aged 65 and older said they are in very good or excellent health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, the leading causes of death for U.S. adults aged 65 or older are heart disease, cancer, and stroke. These account for 61 percent of all deaths in this age group.

What many people don’t realize is that behavior changes and preventive screenings can help them live better and longer lives.

Behavior

Men and women over 50 can take action to improve their overall health. It’s never too late to start.

* Be tobacco free. To talk to someone about how to call the National Quitline at 1-800-QUITNOW.
* Get active. Start small and work up to 30 minutes or more of moderate activity several days a week. Talk to your doctor about what you can do.
* Eat healthy. Lean meats, fish, vegetables, fruits, whole grains and fat free or low fat milk and milk products are best for people of any age.
* Maintain a healthy weight. Balance calorie intake with calories spent in exercise. Talk to your doctor if you start to gain or lose weight unexpectedly.

Screenings

Clinicians order diagnostic tests when they suspect someone has a disease. Screening tests, however, help check for problems before symptoms are apparent. Health experts from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommend the following screenings for men and women over age 50:

**Colorectal Cancer.** This is the third most common type of cancer for both men and women and the second leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. More than 90 percent of cases are diagnosed in people aged 50 or older. The Task Force recommends

* A fecal occult blood test every year
* Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years

Depression. Emotional health is as important as physical health. If you have felt down, sad or hopeless over the last two weeks, or have felt little interest or pleasure in doing things, you might have depression. Talk to your doctor about getting screened.

High Blood Pressure. Have your blood pressure checked at least every two years. If you have high blood pressure, have a blood test for diabetes.

High Cholesterol. Have your cholesterol checked regularly.

Women over age 50 should have the following screenings as well:

Breast Cancer. Mammogram every one to two years. The risk of getting breast cancer increases as a woman gets older. Nearly eight of 10 cases of breast cancer are found in women over age 50.

Cervical Cancer. Pap smear every one to three years.

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In today's uncertain economy, families are looking to cut back on any expenses that seem like a luxury. One of the items receiving scrutiny is gym memberships. Yet, a growing body of evidence suggests that cutting your gym membership may be exactly the wrong move for most cash-strapped families.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, inactive adults have significantly higher direct medical costs than active adults and the costs associated with physical inactivity increase with age. “To put it in perspective,” said Sharon Tarolli, owner of the Curve’s women’s fitness center in Pine Bush, “for every dollar you spend on wellness, you save as much as five dollars on illness”.

One of the leading fitness programs for women in the world, Curves offers women an affordable and effective means to achieve their goals. Curves features a complete 30 minute workout and weight management program that is fun, fast and safe. Curves works every major muscle group with strength training, cardio and stretching. They also offer free weight management classes to help women get started on a new and healthier you.

Curves workouts are enhanced at both the Montgomery and Pine Bush Centers by the addition of the CurveSmart personal coaching system, a new technology that offers a custom, individually tailored workout, moment to moment feedback and progress reports to keep member motivated while they workout. “Our members love CurveSmart and are losing weight and inches like never before. It is so exciting to see women realizing their fitness goals.” says Sharon Tarolli of Pine Bush Curves.

Curves work their way through the Montgomery Curves and the Pine Bush Curves. For more information and a free trial week, call 744-6607 for Pine Bush Curves and 457-7701 for the Montgomery Curves.

— SHARON TAROLLI
Owner, Pine Bush Curves

In today's uncertain economy, families are looking to cut back on any expenses that seem like a luxury. One of the items receiving scrutiny is gym memberships.