

# Physical Fitness after Retirement

## A. Why Exercise?

- You probably already know many of the benefits of exercise...it can help you control your weight, build and maintain endurance and muscular strength, and reduced the risk of a number of serious diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and certain types of cancer.
- There are many other benefits as well. Exercise can help promote better sleep, improve your mood, reduce stress, and even boost your energy levels.

## B. Exercise and Retirement

- A physical fitness routine becomes even more important after retirement as it will counteract the natural age related declines we experience as we move into our senior years. This greatly improves your quality of life, helping you continue to enjoy your hobbies, keep up with your grandkids, and complete everyday activities pain-free.
- Strength training and weight bearing exercises (like walking) also help guard against, and even slow, the progression of osteoporosis.
- Exercise will also help you improve your posture and balance, two key factors in preventing falls in your senior years.

## C. Possible Concerns

- The great thing about retirement is that you'll now have much more time available for fitness, but you may be faced with other concerns.
- If you haven't worked out regularly before, you may not know where to begin.
- Getting and staying motivated is something that every exerciser deals with at some time, so we'll give you some tips about how to increase your motivation.
- We'll give you some tips if you feel intimidated and self-conscious at the gym.
- We'll also talk about how to deal with various health concerns.

## D. Where to Start

- The national guidelines state adults should aim for 30 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise 5 days a week and complete 2 strength workouts a week.
- If this seems daunting start small; even 5 minutes at a time is beneficial. Then you can increase the amount of time you're active as you become more comfortable with it.

## E. Finding Motivation

- Working out with a friend is great because it will make your exercise session more fun and you won't want to let down your friend by not showing up. Along those lines working with a personal trainer can also help because it gives you a regular appointment for exercise, making it harder to skip.

- Setting a goal is also a great way to keep motivated, just make sure your goal is specific. For example, say, “I want to lose 10 pounds” instead of “I want to lose weight.” Also, be honest with yourself and set obtainable goals; a goal of losing 10 pounds in 2 months is doable, but a goal of losing 30 pounds in 2 months is unrealistic and sets you up for failure. Keeping track of your progress also helps keep you motivated because you’ll see what kind of progress you’ve made.
- It’s also important to find activities you like; there is no “right” exercise, only the exercise that’s “right” for you! Running may be a great form of exercise, but if you hate doing it you’re going to make excuses and miss workouts. It’s better to choose an activity you really like. And try new things every so often so you don’t get bored.
- Make exercise a part of your routine and stick to it. Schedule it during times of the day when you have the most energy. It takes a few months before a new activity becomes a habit, but once it does it becomes easier to stick with.

#### F. Overcoming Self-Consciousness

- First, never compare yourself or unconsciously compete with other people in the gym. You never know what kind of a background those people have, how long they’ve been doing those particular exercises, or what kind of natural talents they have.
- Another thing to keep in mind is that most people in the gym are very focused on their own workout and won’t pay attention to the things you do, even if you feel uncoordinated chances are good that no one even noticed.
- Different times of the day may be quieter than others; most gyms are busiest early morning then again in the late afternoon to early evening (before and after work hours).
- Research your gym options before buying a package or membership; different gyms attract different types of clientele. You could also consider working with a trainer at a private studio; not only will they help you complete the workouts with proper form, helping you feel less self-conscious, but at most personal training studios there will only ever be one or two other people training at the same time.
- You can also train in your home with things like resistance bands, small balls, and free weights. These items are small and relatively inexpensive, making them perfect to have in the house.
- Wearing comfortable cloths to the gym will also help you feel less self-conscious.
- Don’t hesitate to ask for help if you feel lost or don’t know how to use a certain piece of equipment, both gym staff and other gym members are happy to help!

#### G. Health Concerns

- Many people have various health concerns that should be taken into consideration before starting an exercise program, but there are very few instances where even the most serious of health conditions would stop a person

from some light exercise. In fact, exercise can improve your quality of life and sometimes help you manage your condition.

- If you are experiencing musculoskeletal pain, both acute and chronic, there are multiple ways to work around most injuries. Doing the right kinds of exercises can help you recover quicker; we've had many clients who've experienced injuries ranging from knee surgery to hip replacements, and without exception they'll tell you that being fit helped them get back on their feet faster and helped them avoid compensation injuries to the other side of the body.
- If you have a serious condition talk to your doctor about what kind of exercise is appropriate and consider working with a fitness professional that has experience working with people who have your condition.

#### H. General Guidelines

- Always check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program.
- For strength workouts you should always take 48 hours of rest between sessions, and remember to always work opposing muscles groups the same amount. For example, follow a set of sit-ups with an exercise for your lower back.
- Cardio (unless you do a particularly intense workout) can be done every day.
- Always maintain good posture during activities, imagine a straight line that goes from your ears, shoulders, hips, and knees.
- Always listen to your body and adjust your workout if need be. Tired muscles are ok, but if you feel pain, numbness, or tingling sensations, stop!

#### I. Cardiovascular Exercise

- Cardio exercise is generally simple to do and there are many activities to choose from, like walking, biking, swimming, and running.
- Try a different activity from time to time to avoid boredom and challenge your body.

#### J. Strength Training

- Machine based works muscle groups in isolation, so they don't teach multiple muscles how to work together. Certain machines, like leg extensions, put unhealthy force on your joints.
- Functional training uses your body weight and small equipment to train multiple muscles at once, so your muscles not only get stronger but also learn how to work together. Then when you do real world activities, like picking up a heavy box or climbing a ladder, you're less likely to get injured.

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