

ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

No matter how old you are, exercise can improve your quality of life and you don't have to spend a lot of time doing it to see and feel improvements. Like everyone else, seniors need to engage in cardiovascular exercise, strength training and flexibility exercises to stay healthy and maintain as much strength and functionality as possible.

Some things that can occur with aging:

Strength: [Sarcopenia](#) is the fancy term scientists have given to describe the loss of muscle, strength, and quality of tissue often seen in older adults. Some experts have suggested that muscle mass declines about 4% each decade from age 25 to 50.

Endurance: As we age, we could lose aerobic fitness and experts believe this often contributes to reduced mobility in daily life.

Flexibility: Joints change with age and this can lead to stiffness, decreased range of motion and more injuries

Balance: Each year, hospitals see over 300,000 patients for broken hips due to falls. Balance exercises can help you avoid injuries from falls and keep you independent and mobile.

Strength Training for Older Adults

Important: Before you get started, it's essential to be examined by your doctor.

If you have any conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis, high blood pressure or heart disease, you'll need to learn the types of exercises you can and can't do. Use the following guidelines to set up your program:

Lift weights for all muscle groups (chest, back, shoulders, arms, abs and legs) at least 2 non-consecutive days each week

Start with no weights or light weights—you can use dumbbells, machines and/or resistance bands

Do each exercise for at least 1 set of 10-15 repetitions. Use enough resistance that you can only do the exercise 15 times. If you can do more, you should increase your weights.

Progress by adding more "sets" (with rest in between) and/or increasing the weights each week

Focus on using good form for each exercise

Be sure to warm up with light exercise before lifting weights

Exercises

Bench Sit & Stand

Stand in front of a chair (sit down first to make sure it's behind you!) with feet about shoulder-width apart. Contract the abs and sit down on the chair. As soon as you make contact with the chair, stand back up and try to do so without rocking back or using momentum. You can place your hands on your thighs if you need to. For added intensity, hold a medicine ball or a dumbbell and don't sit all the way down--stop just before your backside touches the seat.

Ball Taps

Sit in a chair and place a ball front of both feet (a mid-sized ball works best). Sit straight up and try not to rest against the back of the chair, keeping your back straight and your abs contracted. Lift your right foot and tap the top of the ball and take it back down to the floor. Switch sides and do the same with your left foot, alternating each foot for all repetitions. For added intensity, sit on an exercise ball to challenge your balance or try the exercise while standing.

Step Ups

You can do this exercise on a staircase or on a step if you have one. If you're on a staircase, stand at the bottom step and step up with your right foot. Bring your left foot up onto the stair next to your right and then step back down on the floor (hold onto a rail if you need to). Perform all reps by stepping up and down with the right foot. Then switch sides and start with your left foot. If you don't have a staircase or a step, you can simply do another set of ball taps.

Hamstring Curls

Stand in front of a chair and hold onto it for balance if you need to. Bend your right knee, bringing your foot up behind you (like you're kicking your own butt) and keeping the right knee pointing towards the floor and right next to your left knee. Slowly lower back down and repeat all repetitions before switching to the other leg. For challenge, do it without holding onto the chair or add light ankle weights.

Knee Lifts

Hold onto the wall or a chair for balance if you need to. Keep the abs contracted and bring the right knee up to hip level, knee bent at 90 degrees, and lower back down. Repeat all repetitions on the right leg and then switch sides. Add ankle weights or a resistance band for added intensity. You can also do this without support for a challenge

Side Leg Lifts

Stand sideways to a chair or wall for support and lift one leg out to the side, foot flexed and hips, knees and feet in alignment. Try to lift the leg without tilting at the torso--hold

the torso upright as you lift the leg a few inches off the ground. Lower back down and repeat all reps on the same leg before switching sides. Add ankle weights for added challenge.

Wall Push Up

Stand a few feet away from a wall and place hands on wall at shoulder level, a few inches wider than shoulders. Pull the abs in and, keeping back straight, bend elbows and lower body towards the wall until elbows are at 90-degree angles. Push back to the start position, and repeat. The further away from the wall you are, the harder the exercise. Make sure you don't sag in the middle--keep the abs tight and the back flat.

Latissimus Dorsi, or "Lat" Pulls With Bands

Stand or sit holding a resistance band in both hands up over your head. Hands are wider than shoulder-width apart and back is flat, abs engaged. Keep the left hand in place and contract the lat muscles (at the sides of your upper back) to pull the right elbow down towards the ribcage. Press back up and switch sides, alternating right and left for all repetitions.

Lateral Raises

Stand or sit holding light dumbbells in both hands at the sides. Keeping the elbows slightly bent and wrists straight, lift the arms up to the sides only to shoulder level (palms face the floor). Lower back down and repeat for all repetitions. Use full water bottles or soup cans for weights if you don't have dumbbells.

Bicep Curls

Sit or stand holding dumbbells in both hands, palms facing out. Contract the bicep (front of the arm) and curl the weight up towards your shoulder (without touching the shoulder). Lower back down, but keep a slight bend in the elbow at the bottom--don't swing the weight and keep the elbows in place as you curl the weights.

Triceps Extension

Sit or stand and hold a dumbbell in the right hand straight up overhead and directly over your shoulder. Your palm should face the front and you can use your other hand to support the right arm. Bend the elbow and lower the weight down a bit behind your head (the elbow should be facing the right side of the room) to about 90 degrees. Contract the back of the arm to pull the weight back up and repeat.

LOCAL EXERCISE/FITNESS CLASSES FOR SENIORS

Beverly COA:

M & W, 9-10 am, Drop in co-ed low impact exercise group - free.

T & TH, 12:30 –1:30 pm, Exercise for people w/arthritis. Co-ed. Free.
Participants need a doctor's note to join.

Gloucester COA:

Tuesday, 9:45 am, Yoga, \$5 per class.

Wednesday, 12:30 pm,

Chair exercise: stretching, relaxation, and gentle yoga. Voluntary donation.

Tuesday or Thursday, 9:30 am

Tai Chi. Participants must commit for 1 month of classes. Then, pay as you go - \$3/class

Questions? Call Lisa Brayton @ the COA. 978-281-9765 x12

Hamilton COA:

Tuesdays, 8:30 –9:30 am, Low impact exercise. Donation requested.

Call Hamilton COA at 978-468-5595 to register.

Ipswich COA:

Tuesday & Thursday, 9 – 10 am, low impact exercise. \$4 per class.

Tuesday & Thursday, 10:15 – 11:15, Chair exercise. \$4 per class

Tuesdays, 4:15 – 5:15pm, Strength Training. \$7 per class

Mondays, 9:00 – 9:45, Tai Chi

Wednesdays, 11:00 am – Noon, Seated Yoga, \$4 per class

Tuesdays, meet @ 9am. Walking Club. Group meets at & returns to the Senior Center

Questions, call Pat Valcour, 978-356-6650

Manchester COA:

Wednesday, 9:30 – 10:30 am, low impact exercise. Meets at The Plains.

Monday & Thursday, 8:30 – 9:30am, “Strong Women”, strength building class meets at the Manchester Community Center. There is a small fee.

Wednesday, 10 – 11 am, Yoga - Meets at the Congregational Chapel

Tuesday, 8:30 am - “Body & Sole” Walking Club

Contact Carol Schanley at 978-526-1295.

Thursday, 10:00am, Chi Gong @ The Chapel

Rockport COA:

Monday & Friday, 9 – 10 am, Strength & Resistance class, \$4

Friday 10 – 11 am, Strength & Resistance for new students, \$4 per class

Topsfield COA:

Monday, 9:30am, Yoga @ Little Brook Village. \$3 per class

Monday, 11:30am – 12:30pm, Group Fitness, Beginner level- \$2 per class.

Topsfield Fairgrounds Beekeeping Building, Rte 1.

Friday, 9:00am, Strength Training – held at Washington Meadows

Friday, 10 am, Stretch & Tone. Free – Held at Little Brook Village.

Wednesday, 9:45 am, Beginner Exercise group. \$2.00 Held at Little Brook Village.

Tuesday, 9:30 am, Walking Club - Free. Meets at Little Brook Village.

Call 978-887-1523 for more information.

Last revised by I&R 4/10/2008