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Real-Life Benefits of Exercise and Physical Activity

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Why is physical activity important?

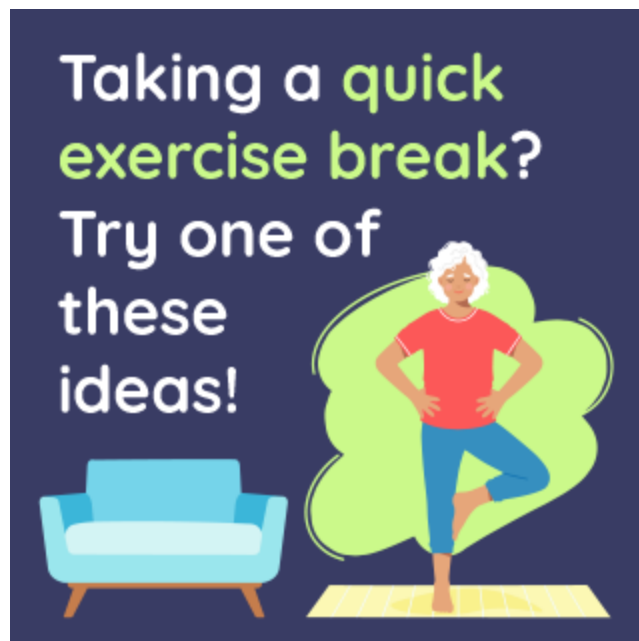
Exercise and physical activity are good for just about everyone, including older adults. No matter your health and physical abilities, you can gain a lot by staying active. In fact, studies show that “taking it easy” is risky. Often, inactivity is more to blame than age when older people lose the ability to do things on their own. Lack of physical activity also can lead to more visits to the doctor, more hospitalizations, and more use of medicines for a variety of illnesses.

Stay Independent with Regular Exercise!



Including all [4 types of exercise](#) can benefit a wide range of areas of your life. Staying active can help you:

- Keep and improve your strength so you can stay independent
- Have more energy to do the things you want to do and reduce fatigue
- Improve your balance and lower risk of [falls and injuries from falls](#)
- [Manage and prevent some diseases](#) like arthritis, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, and 8 types of cancer, including breast and colon cancer
- [Sleep better](#) at home
- Reduce levels of stress and anxiety
- Reach or [maintain a healthy weight](#) and reduce risk of excessive weight gain
- Control your [blood pressure](#)
- Possibly improve or maintain some aspects of [cognitive function](#), such as your ability to shift quickly between tasks or plan an activity
- Perk up your mood and reduce feelings of depression



[Read and share this infographic](#) about the four types of exercise.

Quick tip

Being active can help prevent future [falls and fractures](#). For tips to help prevent falls at home, read [Fall-Proofing Your Home](#).

The [YMCA](#) offers evidence-based group exercise programs for older adults to improve [fitness](#) and [balance for falls prevention](#).

Emotional benefits of exercise

Research has shown that exercise is not only good for your physical health, it also supports emotional and mental health. You can exercise with a friend and get the added benefit of emotional support. So, next time you're feeling down, anxious, or stressed, try to get up and start moving!

Physical activity can help:

- Reduce feelings of [depression](#) and stress, while improving your mood and overall emotional well-being
- Increase your energy level
- Improve [sleep](#)
- Empower you to feel more in control

In addition, exercise and physical activity may possibly improve or maintain some aspects of [cognitive function](#), such as your ability to shift quickly between tasks, plan an activity, and ignore irrelevant information.

Here are some exercise ideas to help you lift your mood:

- **Walking, bicycling, or dancing.** Endurance activities increase your breathing, get your heart pumping, and boost chemicals in your body that may improve mood.
- **Yoga.** This mind and body practice typically combines physical postures, breathing exercises, and relaxation.
- **Tai Chi.** This "moving meditation" involves shifting the body slowly, gently, and precisely, while breathing deeply.
- **Activities you enjoy.** Whether it's gardening, playing tennis, kicking around a soccer ball with your grandchildren, or something else, [choose an activity](#) you want to do, not one you have to do.

You may also be interested in

- Finding [tips to help stay motivated to exercise](#)
- Exploring [safety tips for exercising outdoors](#)
- Reading about the [four types of exercise](#)

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[Read and share this infographic](#) and help spread the word about the

everyday benefits of exercise and physical activity.

For more information

YMCA

800-872-9622

fulfillment@ymca.net

www.ymca.net

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

800-232-4636

888-232-6348 (TTY)

cdcinfo@cdc.gov

www.cdc.gov

MedlinePlus

National Library of Medicine

www.medlineplus.gov

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