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Exercise for Older Adults

Also called: Seniors' fitness

Exercise and physical activity are good for just about everyone, including older adults. There are four main types and each type is different. Doing them all will give you more benefits [<https://medlineplus.gov/benefitsofexercise.html>] .:

- Endurance, or aerobic, activities increase your breathing and heart rate. Brisk walking or jogging, dancing, swimming, and biking are examples.
- Strength exercises make your muscles stronger. Lifting weights or using a resistance band can build strength.
- Balance exercises help prevent falls
- Flexibility exercises stretch your muscles and can help your body stay limber

If you have not been active, you can start slowly and work up to your goal. How much exercise you need [<https://medlineplus.gov/howmuchexercisedoneed.html>] depends on your age and health. Check with your health care provider on what is right for you.

NIH: National Institute on Aging

Start Here

- Exercise and Physical Activity [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-and-physical-activity>]  (National Institute on Aging)
- Exercise and Physical Activity for Healthy Aging: Get Fit for Life [<https://order.nia.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/get-fit-life-book.pdf>]  (National Institute on Aging) - PDF
- Health Benefits of Exercise and Physical Activity [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-and-physical-activity/health-benefits-exercise-and-physical-activity>]  (National Institute on Aging)
- Physical Activity for Older Adults: An Overview [<https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/guidelines/older-adults.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Tips for Getting and Staying Active as You Age [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-and-physical-activity/tips-getting-and-staying-active-you-age>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/ejercicio/como-pueden-personas-mayores-comenzar-hacer-ejercicio>]
- You're Never Too Old: Keep Active as You Age [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2017/12/you-re-never-too-old>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/nunca-se-es-demasiado-viejo>]

Learn More

- Working Out to Stay Sharp: Can Exercise Keep Your Brain Healthier? [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2025/01/working-out-stay-sharp>] 

Treatments and Therapies

- Qigong: What You Need To Know [<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/qigong-what-you-need-to-know>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)

- Tai Chi: What You Need to Know [<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/tai-chi-what-you-need-to-know>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)

- Yoga: Effectiveness and Safety [<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/yoga-effectiveness-and-safety>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)

Related Issues

- Exercising Outdoors: Safety Tips for Older Adults [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-and-physical-activity/safety-tips-exercising-outdoors-older-adults>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/ejercicio/consejos-seguridad-personas-mayores-cuando-hacen-ejercicio-al-aire-libre>]
- Find Your Starting Point: Activity Log [https://www.nia.nih.gov/sites/default/files/finding_yr_starting_point-fillable_0.pdf]  (National Institute on Aging) - **PDF**
- Health Tips for Older Adults [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/healthy-eating-physical-activity-for-life/health-tips-for-older-adults>]  **Easy-to-Read** (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/control-de-peso/alimentacion-saludable-actividad-fisica-vida/adultos-mayores>]

Specifics

- Dr. Roger Fielding on Strength Training for Older Adults [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2020/03/dr-roger-fielding-strength-training-older-adults>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- Exercise and Bone Health [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/staying-healthy/exercise-and-bone-health>] (American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)
- Exercise Helps Ease Arthritis Pain and Stiffness [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/arthritis/in-depth/arthritis/ART-20047971?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/arthritis/in-depth/arthritis/art-20047971?p=1>]
- Exercising with Chronic Conditions [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-and-physical-activity/exercising-chronic-conditions>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/ejercicio/hacer-ejercicio-enfermedades-cronicas>]
- Exercising with Osteoporosis: Stay Active the Safe Way [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/osteoporosis/in-depth/osteoporosis/ART-20044989?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/osteoporosis/in-depth/osteoporosis/art-20044989?p=1>]
- Three Types of Exercise Can Improve Your Health and Physical Ability [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-and-physical-activity/three-types-exercise-can-improve-your-health-and-physical>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/ejercicio/tres-tipos-ejercicio-pueden-mejorar-su-salud-capacidad-fisica>]

Health Check Tools

- Target Heart Rate Calculator [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/get-active/target-heart-rate-calculator.html>] (American Cancer Society)

Videos and Tutorials

- Balance Exercises for Older Adults [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmk21KJuZUM6_Gy9jxzF9sTO_6u_tYCom]   (National Institute on Aging)
- Exercise Examples and Videos [<https://www.nutrition.gov/topics/exercise-and-fitness/exercise-examples-and-videos>]  (Department of Agriculture)
- Go4Life [<https://www.youtube.com/user/NatlInstituteOnAging/search?query=Go4Life>]   (National Institute on Aging)
- Strength Building Exercises for Older Adults [<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmk21KJuZUM6kZzsR2aeTNXYW2Kkjtxp>]   (National Institute on Aging)
- Stretching Exercises for Older Adults [<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCCD15A44D95DBCDF>]   (National Institute on Aging)

Statistics and Research

- Many Types of Exercise Can Lengthen Older Adults' Lives [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2022/11/many-types-exercise-can-lengthen-older-adults-lives>]  (National Institutes of Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/muchos-tipos-de-ejercicio-pueden-alargar-la-vida-de-los>]

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Exercise for Older Adults [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?intr=exercise&aggFilters=ages:older,status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Physical Fitness for Older Adults [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?term=%22physical+fitness%22&aggFilters=ages:older,status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Effects of exercise training on cognitive function in community-dwelling older women. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40753197>]
- Article: Vitamin D3 supplementation enhances the effect of aerobic water-based training on... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40735907>]
- Article: Effectiveness of Remote High-Intensity Aerobic Interval Training on Quality of Life... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40735810>]
- Exercise for Older Adults -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Exercise%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+aged+%5Bmh%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Ba%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Reference Desk

- Definitions of Health Terms: Fitness [<https://medlineplus.gov/definitions/fitnessdefinitions.html>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Find an Expert

- American Heart Association [<https://www.heart.org/en/>]
- Eldercare Locator [<https://www.usaging.org/eldercareloc>] ([USAging](#))
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>] 
- National Institute on Aging [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol>]
- President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition [<https://odphp.health.gov/pcsfn>]
(Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion)



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Exercise and age [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002080.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Exercise and Physical Fitness [<https://medlineplus.gov/exerciseandphysicalfitness.html>]

Older Adult Health [<https://medlineplus.gov/olderadulthealth.html>]

Sports Fitness [<https://medlineplus.gov/sportsfitness.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Exercise for Older Adults* is the National Institute on Aging [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/>]

NIH MedlinePlus Magazine

4 Physical Activity Tips for Older Adults [<https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/4-physical-activity-tips-for-older-adults>]

Physical Activity Isn't Just for Athletes - It's for Everyone [<https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/physical-activity-isnt-just-for-athletes-its-for-everyone>]

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