

Prevent Falls With Exercise!

More than one third of adults age 65 and older fall each year. Those aged 75 and over are four to five times more likely to be admitted to a skilled nursing facility for at least one year as the result of a fall.

Seniors can reduce their risk of falling through regular physical activity. Exercise improves our ability to perform the tasks of daily living, which allows us to maintain mobility and independence. Improving strength through exercise also increases bone density and reduces the risk of injury due to falls.

Many seniors are not involved in enough physical activity. According to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), only 30% of Americans ages 45-64 exercise routinely, and only 32% of those age 65 and over claimed to exercise regularly.

How can we improve these numbers? Remember, exercising doesn't have to be a chore. When searching for an exercise program, consider the activities you enjoy most.

Walking is an excellent form of exercise and doesn't require a membership to a gym or expensive equipment. Simply lace up your shoes and get moving! Walking provides lower extremity weight bearing exercise while also improving your cardiovascular system. The key is to start out slow, perhaps only 10 minutes per day, three to four days a week, and steadily increase your workout until you reach a minimum of 30 minutes per day, three to four days a week.

Dancing can be a fun way to get into the groove of working out. You can even enlist a partner, as exercising with a partner can improve your success rate!

Yoga is a terrific activity that improves flexibility, strength and balance. There are many fun and informative DVDs available, and many YMCAs or local fitness centers offer Senior Yoga classes.

Swimming and water walking are other great exercises that provide a low-impact workout and enhance strength and flexibility while improving cardiovascular health.

Before beginning a new exercise routine or activity, be sure to ask your doctor if it is safe for you to perform. The goal is to remain healthy and prevent falls, after all! And whatever you choose to do, start slow, grab a partner, and have fun!

