

Health & Wellness

How to motivate yourself to get moving

By Kimberly Montes

What is the one thing people 65 and over are likely not doing right now?

Sadly, the answer is exercising for health and fitness. Research reveals that Canadian seniors are projected to reach inactivity levels for ages 65+ of more than 79 per cent. The U.S. is similarly struggling, with surveys revealing that less than one-third of Americans over the age of 65 following the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendation to engage in weekly aerobics and muscle strengthening exercise.

Yes, it can be human nature to engage in a little exercise inertia and miss out on all the positive benefits of exercise. Of course, if you're a senior, illness or surgeries may further complicate a return to physical fitness, and proceeding with caution, and a doctor's guidance, is very important.

However, as much as the call of the couch or post-illness take-it-easy is alluring, there are compelling reasons to get active. Let's look at why movement matters, and how to get moving when age or other restrictions may be part of the equation.

Five Great Reasons to Get Moving

Exercise does five great things for your body and mind. First, there's a big payoff for even minimal movement. Some researchers have found that even as little as 10 minutes a day can help you reap exercise rewards.

1. **Movement:** Some physical activity every day helps you keep your ability to be flexible which is needed for activities big and small. Movement daily helps a person with cardiac endurance, muscle strengthening, and especially helps seniors keep their strength up for an active life

2. **Brain engagement:** It's true, exercise stimulates blood flow, and engages the brain. That means you're thinking and awareness gets a boost right along with

your circulation, muscles and more. There's even research pointing to exercise's ability to increase cerebral capacity, although, if you are like me, you would settle for being able to find your keys more quickly each morning!

3. **Fall prevention:** As we age, there are several things that impact our balance. From changes in inner ear fluid, to muscle memory, blood pressure and overall coordination, it bluntly becomes much easier to take a spill. Exercise not only increases flexibility and physical strength, it helps you achieve better body awareness. This awareness of body and increased levels of coordination help ward off that hip-bone breaking fall, or the bruising and soreness that comes with a hard stumble.

4. **Multi-step memory:** In a nutshell, we lose our cognitive ability to remember multiple step instructions or actions. Mental and physical exercise helps us retain our abilities so we can keep track of those relaxing next steps in your yoga routine. While any exercise routine that works for you is great, yoga can be a gentle, safe and uplifting way to get oxygen, clarity and movement into your day.

5. Finally, mood improvement: Your body may complain about starting exercise, but after is usually a different story. Your circulation is boosted, you're getting more air into your lungs, and you may be enjoying some of those mood-elevating serotonin moments. Serotonin is a brain chemical that is responsible for regulating mood, appetite, and the sleep-wake cycle, which all have their own unique benefits to overall wellness. Finally, you may just have that feeling of accomplishment you get from doing something good for yourself. It's ok to gloat, just a little.

How to Start

The key here is slow and easy, and, did I mention with a doctor's supervision? Particularly if you have had an illness or a medical condition, you'll want to proceed wisely with good guidance from your physician.

After you've checked in, here are some foundational pointers to get you started:

1. **Slow, deep breaths:** Get that air into your lungs, and breathe deeply.
2. **Gentle stretching:** Start with your arms above your head. Lift your arms, then bend over as much as is comfortable or recommended for you. Enjoy some cross-body stretching by moving your arms to the left and right.
3. **Start slowly.** Just do small quantities of movement until you feel ready for more.
4. **Take breaks in between movements.**

Finally, you should never hurt during a workout. If you are breathing strenuously, sweating more than a little, or feel lightheaded or any other symptom, stop immediately.

Build up over time and enjoy the life-enhancing benefits that come to you with regular exercise. You too can beat the over-65 exercise statistics and enjoy a healthier and more mobile life.

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