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Tai Chi's slow, steady, low-impact movements can improve balance and stability, which helps to prevent falls.

Exercise Is Important for Seniors

» BY JULIE ROSE

Regular physical movement and exercise can help seniors maintain independence and increase self-esteem and overall well-being. You need exercises that promote endurance, flexibility, balance and strength.

It's a good idea to check with your doctor before you begin any exercise program. Daily movement is very important, and exercises can be modified to meet your current physical condition.

Adults aged 65 and older need at least 150 minutes per week (30 minutes each day, five days each week) of moderate-intensity activity. Daily activity can be broken into shorter sessions. For example, take a 15-minute walk in the morning and then spend the remaining time gardening in the afternoon.

At least two days each week, your exercises or activities should focus on strengthening your muscles.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EXERCISE FOR SENIORS?

The significant exercise benefits for those 65 and older include:

- Preventing diseases such as heart disease and diabetes
- Improving mental health
- Decreasing risk of falls
- Improving cognitive function
- Providing an opportunity for social engagement
- Improving blood pressure
- Slowing the body's aging process

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BEST EXERCISES FOR SENIORS?

It's important to like the exercises you choose so you'll stick with it. Some that are recommended for seniors include:

- Dancing
- Water aerobics
- Chair yoga
- Resistance band workouts
- Pilates
- Tai Chi
- Walking
- Gentle squats
- Dumbbell strength training

Many of those who practice Tai Chi, which includes slow, steady, low-impact movements, have found it can improve balance and stability, which helps to prevent falls.



JULIE ROSE

Some seniors with diagnoses of arthritis, osteoporosis or cognitive decline may need to avoid high-impact aerobics, deep squats, sit-ups, sprints or vigorous running, stair climbing

and standing toe touches, but other seniors may benefit from them. You should work with your doctor to explore whether you can incorporate them safely into your daily exercise routine.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO EXERCISE?

According to the British Journal of Sports Medicine, exercising shortly after you wake up helps your brain work better all day and can help you stay focused and organized. If you are not a morning person, find a time to exercise that you will adhere to so you can enjoy the many benefits that exercise offers.

Julie Rose is CEO of Paladin Life Care, which provides care and advocacy for senior clients and those with disabilities in Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia. For more information email info@paladinlifecare.com or call (703) 879-6992.