

## The 4 most important types of exercise

*Strengthening, stretching, balance, and aerobic exercises will keep you active, mobile, and feeling great. All four need to be done without fail.*

### 1. Aerobic exercise

Aerobic exercise, which speeds up your heart rate and breathing, is important for many body functions. It gives your heart and lungs a workout and increases endurance. "If you're too winded to walk up a flight of stairs, that's a good indicator that you need more aerobic exercise to help condition your heart and lungs, and get enough blood to your muscles to help them work efficiently," Aerobic exercise also helps relax blood vessel walls, lower blood pressure, burn body fat, lower blood sugar levels, reduce inflammation, boost mood, and raise "good" HDL cholesterol. Combined with weight loss, it can lower "bad" LDL cholesterol levels, too. Over the long term, aerobic exercise reduces your risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, breast and colon cancer, depression, and falls. Aim for 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity activity. Try brisk walking, swimming, jogging, cycling, dancing, or classes like step aerobics.

### 2. Strength training

As we age, we lose muscle mass. Strength training builds it back. "Regular strength training will help you feel more confident and capable of daily tasks like carrying groceries, gardening, and lifting heavier objects around the house. Strength training will also help you stand up from a chair, get up off the floor, and go upstairs," Strengthening your muscles not only makes you stronger, but also stimulates bone growth, lowers blood sugar, assists with weight control, improves balance and posture, and reduces stress and pain in the lower back and joints. Remember, it's important to feel some muscle fatigue at the end of the exercise to make sure you are working or training the muscle group effectively. Push Up and body weight squats with heels on floor and trying to go all the way down are properly the two most effective strength exercises you can do.

### 3: Stretching

Stretching helps maintain flexibility. We often overlook that in youth, when our muscles are healthier. But aging leads to a loss of flexibility in the muscles and tendons. Muscles shorten and don't function properly. That increases the risk for muscle cramps and pain, muscle damage, strains, joint pain, and falling, and it also makes it tough to get through daily activities, such as bending down to tie your shoes. Likewise, stretching the muscles routinely makes them longer and more flexible, which increases your range of motion and reduces pain and the risk for injury. Aim for a program of stretching every day or at least three or four times per week. Stretching is also a must after strength and aerobic workouts to reset your muscle tone to normal. Warm up your muscles first, with a few minutes of dynamic stretches—repetitive motion such as marching in place or arm circles. That gets blood and oxygen to muscles and makes them amenable to change. Then perform static stretches (holding a stretch position for up to 60 seconds) for the calves, the hamstrings, hip flexors, quadriceps, and the muscles of the shoulders, neck, lower back, groin, hip, and adductors (long and short).

### 4. Balance exercises

Improving your balance makes you feel steadier on your feet and helps prevent falls. It's especially important as we get older, when the systems that help us maintain balance—our vision, our inner ear, and our leg muscles and joints—tend to break down. "The good news is that training your balance can help prevent and reverse these losses," Typical balance exercises include standing on one foot or walking heel to toe, with your eyes open or closed.

