

Regaining Your Fountain Of Youth

By Dr. Rob Danoff

Too many members of our older population give up and give into aging because they feel it is too late to start being active. But you know what, that is a bunch of prunes! So you are a little slower, your reflexes aren't as sharp as they used to be, and your joints make more noise than a jackhammer. OK, so you may not qualify for that job as a ballet dancer at the Academy, but that doesn't mean you need roll over into that great big television chair and watch everyone else being active.

Here are my questions: do you want to feel better on a daily basis? Are you willing and motivated to work toward personal fitness? If so, then you have a great opportunity to increase your mobility, get physically stronger and decrease your risks for heart disease, osteoporosis, diabetes and falls from lack of balance and strength.

How does that sound to you?

If your attitude is positive and you are ready to kick

start yourself out of that reclining chair and into a healthier routine, then let's get started!

EXERCISE-THE ANTI-AGING DRUG

It's never too late to get active and fit. This may be as simple as making physical activity a part of your everyday routine. You see, part of aging well is keeping both mentally and physically active. This activity need not be strenuous to get your health benefits because the dividends of health can be achieved by increasing the duration, intensity and frequency of your fitness program. You may be surprised at how much better you will feel by increasing your bodies "giddy-up and go."

DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

Yes, because one of the most important reasons for adults 65 and older is that it can help promote "functional fitness," which is the strength, balance, flexibility and endurance needed to carry out activities of daily life (playing with the grandkids, which can even drain a 20-year old). Other examples include standing up, sitting down, going up and down stairs, standing at a sink long enough to prepare meals and even driving a car. Another benefit which you will soon notice is that regular exercise also reduces your stress and anxiety while also improving your overall quality of life." For those of you who live by yourself or feel a little lonely, exercise can provide social support because it may get you out of your house and reconnected with other people.

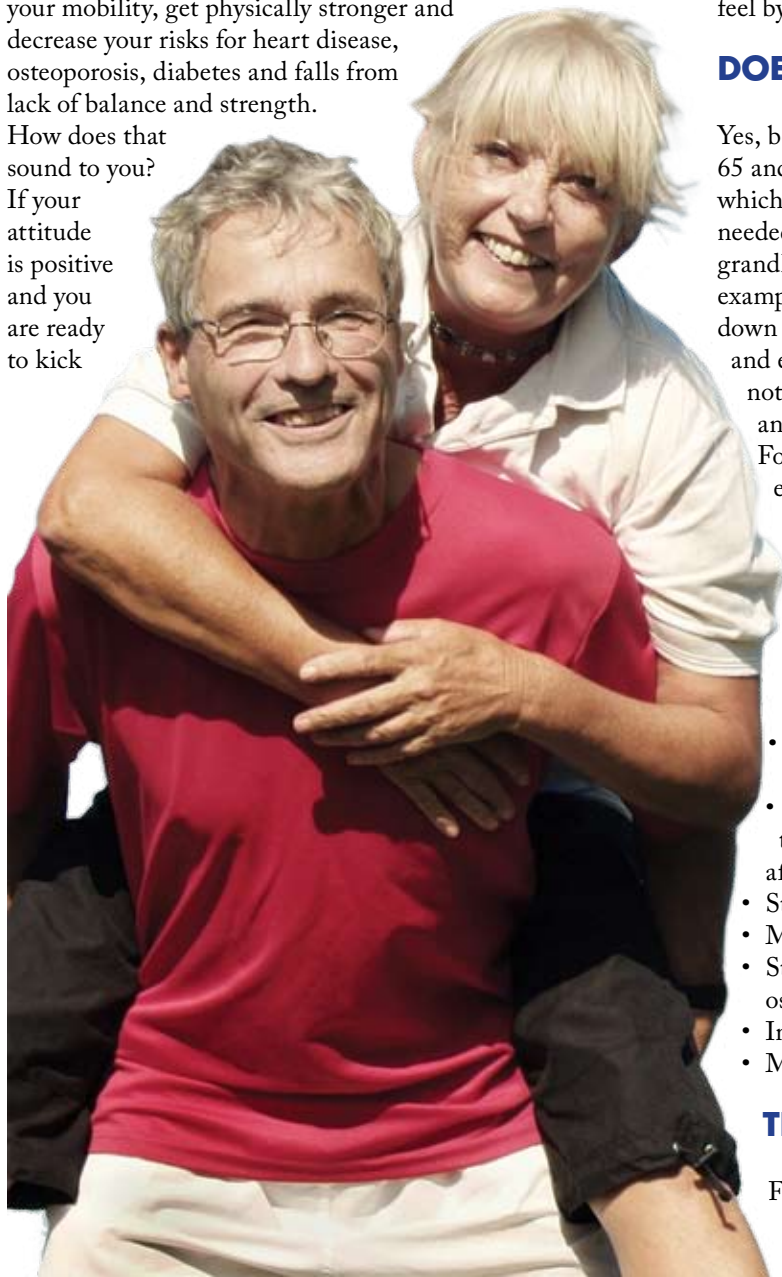
This way you are still involved with the world and may not be so afraid to experiment with new activities when you see others trying as well.

EXERCISE: THE HEALTHY PROOF

- Reduces your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.....it prevents or helps to control diabetes.
- Reduces or prevents back pain, as well as decreasing the symptoms and improving the movement of people affected with arthritis.
- Strengthens muscles and prevents falls.
- Maintains balance, mobility and independence.
- Strengthens bone, decreasing your risk for developing osteoporosis.
- Improves your energy levels.
- May even improve the regularity of your bowels.

THE STARTING LINE-WHERE TO BEGIN

First, easy does it. Before you begin any exercise



program, speak with your physician to get a game plan of safety. Work within your healthy zone. Next, line up to take a class at the "Y" or other center where there is a certified fitness instructor who can devise a safe program for you. Four areas to eventually include are:

- 1.** Heart and respiratory fitness, which is any activity that increases your heart rate and breathing (ask your physician for safety guidelines) over a period of 20 to 30 minutes per day. Choices include walking, dancing, swimming, and for you domestic folks, raking the leaves or scrubbing the floor.
- 2.** Strength exercises, which can help build or maintain our muscles. This will increase our metabolism, which can help to either maintain or reduce our weight and assists in blood sugar control.
- 3.** Balance exercises such a Tai Chi or other techniques. These help to decrease the risk of unwanted falls, broken bones and other injuries.
- 4.** Flexibility or stretching techniques such as yoga. I remember one instructor who said, "In yoga, we don't tell a person by their age, but by their flexibility." These types of exercises help to maintain posture and joint health.

Please do not exercise to the point where you are out of breath, get dizzy or have any chest pain. You can get great results by starting slowly, while incorporating a regular routine of physical activity into your daily life. For more information on safe activities for Seniors, call 800-222-2225 to obtain the free book called "Exercise: A Guide from the National Institute on Aging."



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