

Taking the *WORK* out of Workouts!

By Karyn Maynard MSNH

Out of 100 people, how many do you suppose LOVE to exercise? What is your personal understanding of what constitutes exercise? Most people think of sit-ups, weight lifting, running or taking an exercise class at the gym. Let's throw away all of our old exercise models and start fresh with *just seniors* in mind.

Many people consider the official age of senior-hood to be 65. In this article, let's lower the age limit down to 50. Let's talk about age-appropriate exercise that's safe, doesn't require a gym membership and feels good.

Before we start, these suggestions are for people who are healthy and not undergoing any kind of medical treatment that inhibits them from exercising. Check with your doctor and get an "OK" if you have any doubts about the safety of starting any kind of exercise program.

Some of these suggestions may not seem like exercise at first, however, they qualify. Tomorrow morning, before you get out of bed, stretch your legs towards the end of your bed. Take a deep breath and exhale as you stretch. Pull one knee into your chest and hug it. Now do the other. Sit up and bend forward letting your fingertips walk down your legs till you feel a *gentle* stretch in your lower back. Add any kind of stretch that feels good. If you need some ideas, watch a dog or cat stretch!

Starting your day with some simple stretching will become a wonderful habit that will help keep you limber as well as put you in a positive mood.

The second part of age-appropriate exercise is the cardiovascular component. This is where you try and get your heart rate elevated *just enough* to strengthen it. Your heart is a muscle; therefore it needs to be exercised. Your lungs also need to be challenged occasionally and brisk movement causes you to breathe more deeply, a very good thing.

If you're a senior, it's important to be careful about the type of cardiovascular exercise you choose. Exercising can lead to an emergency if you push yourself too hard. Here's a way to gage your level of exertion and stay within a safe range. When walking fast, bike riding or even sweeping out your garage, you should be able to carry on a conversation. In other words, you shouldn't be so out of breath that you can't converse, but you should notice your breathing is a little more labored.

If it's summer, walk in the morning. Go walking well before twilight if you have any kind of vision problems. This is just basic common sense, but it's still good to be reminded.

The last ingredient in our recipe for health is resistance work or weight lifting. If you decide to try lifting weights, I would strongly suggest that you hire a personal trainer for a short period to make sure you lift correctly. It's easy to tear a muscle, ligament or tendon if you don't know how to properly lift. Low on funds? You can find simple examples of senior-appropriate exercise in all sorts of places. The Seniors First Information and Assistance Program can help direct you! There are many free printouts available on line, so ask your kids to print some pictures for you if you're not computer savvy. Call your local recreation department or your church for help and suggestions. Help is out there and information is always available, but YOU must be willing to ask for help in getting started.

Once you get the information, start doing the types of movement that you think you'll enjoy. Start slowly and don't over-do in the beginning. In fact, don't ever over-do your exercising.....leave that to the young people. As seniors, we just want to feel the best we can at our age and that, dear friends, is entirely possible!

The Older Adult Advisory Commission is responsible for advising the Department of Health and Human Services and the Board of Supervisors on the needs of Placer County's older adults. Meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday at 1:00 PM. More information may be found online at:

<http://www.placer.ca.gov/Departments/hhs/adult/OlderAdultAdvisoryCommission.aspx>

or by calling the Public Authority at (530) 886-3680.