

HEALTHY AGING

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Healthy aging is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as “the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age.”¹ In other words, healthy aging is not the absence of chronic diseases, but the ability to cope and thrive in daily life. Yes, as our age increases chronologically, we are biologically declining, but with a positive and optimistic attitude about life in general and ourselves, we can assert that age is only a number, and be psychologically youthful forever.

To achieve and maintain this state of wellness, we must make physical activity a way of life. Engaging in daily exercise helps us improve overall health and avoid diseases such as osteoporosis, diabetes, hypertension, and even cancer. Exercise also provides great benefits to our emotional and mental health.

Four types of exercises are necessary for older adults, and they are: endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility. Since each movement benefits the body differently, it’s important to find the type of activity that is best suited for one’s needs.

- **Endurance:** yard work, brisk walking, swimming, and climbing stairs improve heart, lungs, and circulatory health.
- **Strength:** muscles can be strengthened with activities such as lifting weights, wall push-ups, carrying groceries, arm curls, and using resistance bands. Strong muscles will help you maintain your balance, prevent falls, and also give you more independence to do daily activities.
- **Balance:** this is important in preventing falls. Balance exercises can entail standing from the

seating position, standing on one foot, and the heel to toe walk.

- **Flexibility:** stretching exercises are recommended to improve your flexibility and to help you move more freely.

SAFETY TIP: Always consult with your primary care physician before engaging in any of these activities and get assistance if necessary. Remember to breathe deeply and freely.

¹ “The Inspire Research Initiative” <https://link.springer.com/article/10.14283/jfa.2020.18>

For more detailed explanations on exercise for older adults, please visit:

¹ NIH, National Institute on Aging. Exercise and physical activity <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/four-types-exercise-can-improve-your-health-and-physical-ability>