

# Stay Healthy – Stay Independent!

**For a frail person, the main goal is to be as independent as possible. The way to do this is to increase strength, maintain balance, focus on flexibility, and increase endurance.**

## Did you know?

Habit is the single best predictor of inactivity. Often a lifetime of ingrained behavior must be overcome. Incorporating exercise as part of a previously established routine will make it easier to remember to exercise. Include simple exercises in a daily routine to meet goals!

- For a frail person, just working on getting up and down out of a chair unassisted is using muscles that need to be exercised.
- Focus first on individual goals for each person, his or her concerns, and any barriers that prevent the exercise.

*Note: If exercise results in chest pain, dizziness, cold sweats, extreme breathlessness, or very rapid heart rate that lasts longer than 5 to 10 minutes after stopping activity, consult a physician.*

## Tips for incorporating exercise into daily activities:

- Exercise in short, 10-minute bouts.
- Set a schedule. The key is to set aside specific days and times for exercise, making it just as much a regular part of a daily schedule as everything else.
- Wear comfortable clothes that don't restrict movement.
- Wear leg warmers or over-the-knee socks that can help prevent sore muscles in the lower leg.
- If a movement causes pain, stop! The old adage "No pain, no gain," is not true.

## Remember...

The goals are to increase strength, maintain balance, focus on flexibility, and increase endurance:

### Strength Training

- Include a single set of 10 to 15 repetitions using 8 to 10 different exercises, performed 2 to 3 times per week.
- Each repetition should be performed slowly, through a full range of motion while avoiding holding one's breath.
- The exercise program should involve all major muscle groups.

### Balance and Flexibility

- Stretch major muscle groups once per day after exercise when muscles are more compliant.
- Incorporate a balance training and weight transfer program twice per week.



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**Endurance**

- Engage in moderate aerobic activity for a combined total of at least 30 minutes, most days of the week.
- Individual bouts of activity may be as brief as 10 minutes.

**Common Barriers to Exercise: How to Approach**

| Barrier               | Approach  |
|-----------------------|---|
| Self-efficacy         | Begin slowly with exercises that are easily accomplished; advance gradually; provide frequent encouragement.    |
| Attitude              | Promote positive personal benefits of exercise; identify enjoyable activities.                                  |
| Discomfort            | Vary intensity and range of exercise; employ cross-training; start slowly; avoid overdoing.                     |
| Disability            | Specialized exercises; consider personal trainer or physical therapist.   |
| Poor balance / ataxia | Assistive devices can increase safety as well as increase exercise intensity.                                   |
| Fear of injury        | Balance and strength training initially; use of appropriate clothing, equipment, and supervision; start slowly. |
| Habit                 | Incorporate into daily routine; repeat encouragement; promote active lifestyle.*                                |
| Subjective norms      | Identify and recruit influential others; education of patient and influential family/friends.                   |
| Fixed income          | Walking and other simple exercises; use of household items; promote active lifestyle.*                          |
| Inclement weather     | Walk in the mall; use senior centers; promote active lifestyle.*  |
| Cognitive decline     | Incorporate into daily routine; keep exercises simple.  |
| Illness / fatigue     | Use a range of exercises/intensities that patients can match to their varying energy level.                     |

*\* Examples of an active lifestyle include using a golf pull cart while golfing, using a push mower, participating in activities such as stand and cast fishing or gardening, and taking the stairs.*

**When should a doctor be consulted?**

If muscles or joints are sore the day after exercising, too much exercise may have been done. Next time, exercise at a lower intensity. If the pain or discomfort persists, talk to the doctor. Also talk to the doctor if any of the following symptoms are experienced while exercising:

- chest pain or pressure
- trouble breathing or excessive shortness of breath
- light-headedness or dizziness
- difficulty with balance
- nausea

*Tips courtesy of the American Academy of Family Physicians, American College of Sports Medicine and the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics*