



## Can I exercise safely if I am over 40?

As exercise physiologists, wellness specialists and personal trainers' people ask us about these topics when they want to begin an exercise program and are over 40 years of age:

1. Are there any exercises I should be wary of?
2. What should I ask my doctor about exercise? You always hear you are supposed to ask them first.
3. Why is warming up & cooling down so important when you exercise?
4. What should I do to make an exercise program the best?
  - a. Strength
  - b. Flexibility
  - c. Cardiovascular/continuous movement exercise
  - d. Balance exercise to limit/stop falls

## Are there any exercises I should be wary of?

As part of the aging population there are many pros and cons connected with exercise. How do we know what is helpful and what could be detrimental? The number one factor we speak about is doing exercises that make sense for what you need them for (why do squats and lunges if you sit at a desk for most of your day). We call it ROI (Return On Investment). You want the biggest bang for your buck with your investments and you should look for the same with exercise. Your program should consist of exercises that are proper; not the same as your significant other or friend. You could have the same medical issue as a friend or SO but that does mean you can take the same medication or dosage. Well, the same goes for exercise. Find a program that fits into your schedule that takes your specific issues in mind and feels the best for you.

## **What should I ask my doctor about exercise? You always hear you are supposed to ask them before beginning any program...**

A common refrain from people we talk to is “I went to my doctor and I forgot to ask questions”. First of all you should always bring a notebook with specific questions to ask. They can be about symptoms or care for an issue. Never feel you are taking their time; they are there to help you. Since your doctor (PCP) is a clearinghouse for you, ask them about exercise and its considerations with any issues you may have, such as:

- Elevated/low blood pressure
- Cholesterol
- Circulatory issues
- Bone, muscle or joint discomfort
- Anything different than the norm

Many doctors have just a cursory knowledge of proper exercise so they will tell you things like:

- Go for a walk
- Strength train
- Stretch

When it comes to getting more correct information after you talk to your doctor is if they know any of the following:

- Medical Specialists
  - Orthopedic Surgeons
  - Physiatrist – the best when it comes to diagnose an injury and treat it
  - Physical Therapists for injuries
  - Exercise Physiologists
- Wellness Specialists/Personal Trainers
- Media/Friends

## **Why is warming up & cooling down so important?**

When you think of the importance of a proper warm up and cool down before and after exercising you should think of the analogy of a car. A car moves better in warm weather than cold. Muscles are the same; they move easier when warm.

Cool down is important because it helps slow your heart rate. If you just stopped exercising gravity will take the blood to your legs and make them very sore.

## **When we hear about the components of a balance/d exercise program, what are they?**

The four components of any exercise program are strength, flexibility, cardiovascular (continuous movement) and balance.

- **Strength** – Strength training or resistance training builds muscle which pulls on bones. Strength training makes bones stronger as well. Strength also keeps joints separated which reduce the risk of arthritis. It also helps keep your posture better for a better low back. That includes abdominal strength as well.
- **Flexibility** – Flexibility is important because it allows your muscles and bones to move easier. It separates joints along with strength training and you will move more effortlessly. The opening of joints makes it easier to get down on the floor and play with your grandchildren and then get back up afterwards.
- **Cardiovascular (continuous movement)** – Continuous movement exercising is great for your circulatory system. Like warming up, constant movement forces blood through your body faster. The faster your blood moves the quicker everything goes through your body and the quicker things get through your body the faster things that are detrimental leave (waste products).
- **Balance** – Balance has become an important component of exercise; especially working with a population that is aging. You can try to stand on one foot and brush your teeth or just stand on one foot while in a grocery aisle (just pick one foot up about ½ inch off the floor or you might look like a flamingo). Once you get a better you can try to do some simple strength of flexibility exercises while standing on one foot. It does work and your confidence will increase.



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