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Introduction

We're living in a world where everyone wants everything immediately. We have fast food restaurants on every corner, the ability to shop on our phones, live streaming sports events and nearly everything we need at our fingertips. Throw into the mix the plethora of junk food that is available for us to purchase and consume and it's really no wonder that, **worldwide, we continue to get more and more overweight and obese.**

Because everything is so convenient, the output required to get things we want is minimal, if not zero. Instead of walking to the store, or spending a few hours trotting around a mall doing some shopping, we order our groceries online and buy new clothes and furniture at the click of a button.

Instead of putting in the time and energy prepping for and cooking a family dinner, we call up the pizza guy or swing by a McDonald's and pick up a cheap meal for the family. All this convenience may seem nice but combine that with all the junk we consume and it's no wonder the current health status of our world is subpar.

The health risks of being overweight and obese are frightening. The heavier you are, the higher your chance of getting type 2

diabetes, having heart disease and high blood pressure, and cancers such as colon, kidney and breast.

Obesity is not just prevalent among adults, either, as it is slowly creeping up in children as well.

Overweight children are more prone to becoming and remaining overweight adults.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 2.8 million people die each year due to repercussions of being overweight or obese. While overweight and obese individuals were mostly seen in countries with high-incomes, we are now seeing this health epidemic in low and middle income countries as well.

Although pharmaceutical companies are all racing to create the latest and greatest obesity drug, it's no secret that diet and exercise are vital in helping control this growing epidemic. As human nature tends to sway, however, most people would rather take a pill than put in the work to improve their health.

It is important to take responsibility for your own health and well-being. By being informed and taking an active role in your health, you can help decrease your chance of becoming another statistic.

Chapter 1 – Steps to Begin Exercise

There's an old adage that says you're never too old to start something new. When it comes to exercise, this is no exception. While you may have never really been very active for the majority of your life, it's never too late to start incorporating exercise into your lifestyle and reaping the benefits.

While you may think you need to have the drive of Arnold Schwarzenegger or the flexibility of Stretch Armstrong, think again.

Getting active and exercising is actually pretty simple and can be tailored to fit your likes.

An important first step in beginning to exercise is to first seek medical clearance. Make an appointment with your doctor before you begin. He/she will be able to tell you if there are any medical conditions or limitations you should be aware of that could impact your health or ability to exercise.

Also consider working with a certified personal trainer if you are interested in using the gym as an outlet for exercise. A trainer can help ensure you are exercising with proper form, which helps reduce your chance of injury. They can also tailor programs

around specific conditions, such as a knee replacement or back problems.

Secondly, you'll want to think about your goals with exercising.

- Do you want to exercise to stay mobile and active?
- To gain some strength?
- To build muscle to reduce the risk of injury in case of a fall?
- To lose some weight?

There are tons of different reasons people have for wanting to start exercising. No matter what reasons you may pick, so long as it is meaningful to you, it's good enough!

By understanding and recognizing your goal(s), you can structure a systematic time-frame to reach them.

For example, if you want to drop five pounds, you'll want to make sure you leave yourself enough time to drop a healthy amount of weight each week as you progress towards reaching that five pound total.

Once you've been cleared to exercise and have some goals in mind, it's important to make sure you make exercise a priority.

Just as you may have other regularly-scheduled commitments that you don't miss, view exercise the same way. Pencil it in your calendar just as you would a lunch date with a friend or visit to see the grandkids.

If your days tend to be full and busy, try to squeeze exercise in first thing in the morning. That way, no matter how hectic your day becomes, you've already gotten a workout in.

When you think about all the benefits of exercise- weight control, reduced disease risk, increased mood & energy, just to name a few- it's really a no-brainer. Knowing that there are actions you can take today to increase your length and quality of life should be motivation enough. It's never too late for you to start exercising and reaping the benefits of living a healthier life.

Chapter 2 - You're Only As Old As You Feel

We all know that person who, when asked how old they are, respond with “Who cares! I still feel like I’m 25!” There really is some truth to the statement that you’re only as old as you feel. While aging is a natural and inevitable process, there are still things we can do to feel better and live more active, fulfilled and independent lives.

Enjoy Each Day

Life is unpredictable. While chances of mortality increase as we get older, death can happen anytime. Accidents, being at the wrong place at the wrong time and sudden illnesses can happen out of nowhere and limit our days here on earth.

Whether a young kid or an older adult, enjoying each day is so important. Find beauty in the little things, do stuff that makes you laugh and smile and surround yourself with good people. Live in the present and don’t let the past tie you down.

Don’t Let Age Be an Excuse

Never think you’re too old to do something.

Normally it is our minds that limit our capabilities, not our age or our bodies.

Try something mentally engaging, like learning how to use a computer or smartphone. Join a local organization and learn how to swing and ballroom dance. The possibilities are endless. The only limits we have are the ones our mind places on us.

Move, Move, Move

The less we move, the harder moving becomes. Make sure to always stay active. Go to your local shopping center and take laps around the mall. Join a fitness facility and swim laps in their pool. It's paramount to find things that you enjoy doing to ensure you stick to them. Call up a friend and take a walk through the neighborhood and chat. Having a buddy increases your chance of accountability. Being active increases energy, too!

Get Involved

Whether it's a local organization you can perform community service at or a special interest club, get social!

Being around others is great for mental health. Surrounding yourself with high-quality relationships is key. Quality time is great for our happiness and well-being.

Don't Let Age Be Your Excuse

Find ways to get and stay active and surround yourself with people who are uplifting and supportive. An active body tends to stay active much longer than a sedentary one. Find things each day that you can do to both enjoy living in the moment and increase your chances of a healthy, happy tomorrow.

Chapter 3 - Ways to Stay Active in Your Golden Years

You realize the importance of staying active in your Golden Years- awesome! There are so many ways you can get moving that don't require a gym or even activities that feel like exercise.

The most important thing is to find something that you actually enjoy doing. Not only will you have fun while staying active, but you won't even realize you're exercising!

Here are some activities you can try that will get your heart pumping and release those feel-good endorphins without having to step foot into a gym.

Walking

Let's face it, who doesn't like a breath of fresh air or some laps around the mall and some window shopping?

Walking is a great way to spend some time connecting with nature or to bring a friend along and catch up on the latest. Best of all, all you need to walk is a pair of sneakers!

****Ramp It Up***

Try walking with hand weights or walking poles to burn extra calories. You can also find a walking path that is hilly to add some extra oomph to your route.

Golfing

Another great time to socialize and exercise, golf provides a great combination of both.

Call up some buddies for a round of golf at your favorite course, or try a new one to change it up. Golf involves walking, requires balance, and also works on your concentration skills. Not only are you getting physically active, but you're working your mental muscle as well.

****Ramp It Up***

Skip the golf cart. Try walking the duration of the course instead. You can also try carrying your golf bag around instead of rolling it across the turf.

Swimming

One great thing about swimming is its low impact effect on your joints.

If walking or jogging is too painful for your joints, swimming is a fantastic alternative way to still exercise. Swimming requires cardiovascular work and incorporates nearly all your muscle

groups. In addition to swimming laps, you can also use water weights to do a strength training routine.

Ramp It Up

Swim as fast as possible from one end to the other, and then swim back at a normal pace. This will get your heart rate pumping faster than swimming at a normal pace. You can also try reducing the amount of rest you take in between laps for more calorie burning.

Dancing

Nothing says quality time like dancing with your significant other while burning calories.

There are many organizations on the local community level that offer dance classes. Joining a class can also be a great way to meet new people! Experiment with different styles of dancing, such as tap and ballroom, to find one that suits you best.

Ramp It Up

Try a dance class that involves a faster-type dance style, such as jive or square dancing. You can even try a Zumba class—a Latin dance class that involves aerobics and dancing.

The exercise options are endless. You can take a yoga or tai chi class, take a bike ride, go canoeing or do Pilates. Finding

something you love to do that keeps you active is important. Try changing up your fitness activities on a regular basis to keep your interest peaked. The more you move, the longer you'll be able to.

Chapter 4 – The Pillars To Great Exercise

No matter how long we've been exercising or how on-track we feel, there is always room to improve when it comes to working out.

It's also good to refresh your memory on things that you can do to improve your workout accountability and perform at your peak ability.

Here are some key things to do and remember when working out.

Drink, Drink, Drink

In addition to the fact that our bodies need an adequate amount of water (about 3 quarts minimum) each day to function properly, sweating increases water loss.

Be sure to drink before, during and after your workout. Carry a water bottle with you during your workout to encourage drinking, instead of having to stop at a water fountain repetitively.

Find a Workout Buddy

Motivation is much greater when shared.

Ever notice that you clean your house much faster when you have a friend over to talk to while doing so? Being around others makes us feel more motivated and accountable. By finding someone who can meet you to exercise a few times a week, you are more likely to show up instead of skipping that workout.

Practice Consistency

While any workout is better than none, consistency is best. Create a schedule where you absolutely work out x amount of days per week and leave a few days open as optional.

If your schedule allows and you're feeling good on one of your "off" days, get some exercise in. Otherwise, don't allow yourself to compromise on your scheduled workout days.

Add Some Weights

Try mixing some strength training into your aerobics routine. If you normally walk on a treadmill for cardio, grab a light pair of hand weights and pump your arms while walking. You can also try picking up some weights during an aerobics class for an extra burn and boost to your routine.

Focus on Pace

It's easy to get lost in a combination of a cardio session and a conversation with your gym pal. But the less we focus on the task at hand, the more likely we are to slow down or not exert ourselves as much as we should be.

Try to keep a steady pace, particularly while on a stationary bike or elliptical, and take note of where you're at. If you normally walk a 3.0 on the treadmill, boost your speed up by .1 every week to increase exertion and distance covered.

As with all things in life, plateaus happen and brick walls appear out of nowhere.

It's important to keep changing up your routine by tweaking little things here and there.

Keeping our bodies guessing about which physical activity it will be performing next is the key to improvement and progress.

By always making our workouts better, we will always get better ourselves

Chapter 4 - Sample Gym Exercise Routine

If you're the type of person that likes to hit the gym to exercise, there are several ways you can get a workout in without ever having to touch the free weights or exercise machines.

There are five components to physical fitness, two of which are flexibility and cardiovascular endurance. While two of the other three involve muscular strength and endurance, all are equally important.

In order to make sure you are achieving a balance of all five, **it's important to make sure you incorporate cardio and flexibility exercises.**

Here is an example of a workout routine that combines both flexibility and cardiovascular exercises.

Flexibility

Note there are two types of stretches- dynamic and static.

Dynamic stretching (D) involves continual movements that help increase range of motion.

Static stretching (S) helps lengthen muscles and involves holding a stretch for up to 30 seconds.

This workout is a combination of both.

Aim to tackle a flexibility routine 2-3 times per week.

Perform 2-5 sets of each and hold the stretch (S) or perform the motion (D) for 20-30 seconds

Tricep Stretches (S)

Shoulder Rolls (D)

Neck Rotation (D)

Shoulder Circles (D)

Overhead Reach (S)

Arm Raises (D)

Hand Stretch (S)

[*For a demonstration and description of all these stretches click here](#)

Cardiovascular Endurance:

For cardiovascular exercise, you can choose a variety of machines and options to get a workout in.

Spend about 3 days a week doing 20-60 minutes of cardio of your choice.

Make sure you are putting forth enough effort that you are working hard but not too hard. The conversation test is a good way to gauge how hard you're working. You should be able to hold a conversation to a degree but not so easily that it's no different than having a conversation sitting down. Some cardio options are:

- Treadmill

- Recumbent Bike
- Rowing Machine
- Elliptical
- Stationary Bike
- Swimming
- Water Aerobics

**Before engaging in these activities it is imperative to first be shown exactly how to operate machines and be cleared by your doctor to exercise*

By being active, via whatever means may suit you best, you can increase the chance of being healthy, mobile and independent for years to come.

Chapter 5 – Seniors and Weight Lifting: Is It Safe?

No matter your age, the health benefits of strength training always abound.

As we age, one of the biggest perks about lifting weight is offsetting the natural muscle loss that occurs with time. Medically

known as sarcopenia (muscle loss as a result of aging), this condition worsens when our muscles are left inactive. In fact, starting in our 30's, we can lose 3-5% of muscle mass every ten years if we are and continue to remain physically inactive.

While muscle loss is inevitable whether we are active or not, there is certainly a benefit to reducing the amount you will experience.

As we lose muscle, we lose strength and our ability to move freely and easily.

This muscle loss also reduces our stamina. The less stamina we have, the less likely we are to get up and move.

Enter a slippery slope of muscle loss leading to more muscle loss. Chances of being admitted and readmitted to a hospital for health-related conditions increases greatly as we become more and more inactive.

According to an article published on the (1) National Institutes of Health (NIH) website titled "Protecting muscle mass and function in older adults during bed rest," clear evidence exists showing a relationship between resistance exercise and combating muscle loss and loss of functional capacity.

It is clear that strength training makes sense, no matter your age, to help delay or reduce the

natural muscle loss that occurs as part of the aging process, and to fight osteoporosis.

In a study done by (2) Exercise Physiologist Mark Peterson, published in the *Medicine & Science In Sports & Exercise*, he found that more than 1,300 adults fifty and older could increase muscle mass by an average 2.5 pounds in only five months.

Look at Jack LaLanne, “The Godfather of Fitness”- a perfect example of why strength training can and should be done throughout all ages and stages of life.

For over seventy-five years Jack lived with his top priority in life being his workout each day. He was a big proponent of encouraging the elderly and disabled to work out for health. Jack was a true testament to his preaching, and lived a healthy, vibrant and active ninety-seven years of life.

Once you’re cleared by your doctor and given permission to start strength training, get to it!

There are ways you can safely add strength training to your daily routine. Whether with weights or with resistance bands, strength training is key.

Starting slowly is very important. Using your own body weight to supply resistance is a good place to start. As you become comfortable and confident with exercises and proper form, start

using light dumbbells to add more resistance. Jumps of five pounds at a time are a safe bet as you become stronger.

The proof is everywhere, not just in the scientific journals and studies but in the lives of those who were fitness pioneers and lived a long and very active life. Strength training works, no matter what your age. You are never too old to start.

- (1) <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3276215/>
- (2) <http://www.npr.org/2011/02/21/133776800/seniors-can-still-bulk-up-on-muscle-by-pressing-iron>

Chapter 6- Sample Weight Workout Plan for 65+

Staying active is key to healthy aging.

Science has continually proven that strength training for seniors is beneficial in helping counteract the natural process of muscle loss with age.

If you're looking for a weight lifting plan, here is a great work out you can try.

Note that sets refer to groups of reps. Reps are repetitions, the number of times you repeat a particular exercise consecutively.

Aim to do the following total-body workout three times per week, with a day of rest in between each workout.

Total-Body Workout

(Aim for 10 reps of each, 2-3 sets total per exercise)

Overhead Press (Shoulders)

Sit ups or Crunches (Abs/Lower Back)

Upright Rows (Shoulders/Back)

Side Raises (Shoulders/Back)

Lunges (Legs)

Squats (Legs)

Curls (Biceps)

Tricep Extension (Triceps)

Wall Pushups (Chest)

Toe Raises (Calves)

**For demonstrations of these exercises simply search on youtube and you will have step by step tutorials and lots of variations to keep things fresh*

Be sure to seek medical clearance before engaging in a strength training routine. Drink plenty of water before, during and after your workout. Always warm up before working out and cool down upon completion.

Chapter 7 – Over 65? Listen Up! Exercise Can Improve Your Sex Life

As we age, we may feel like we are destined to enjoy less and less of life's pleasures.

But did you know that exercise can actually improve your sex life? As if feeling more energized, being healthier and looking better wasn't a big enough set of perks of exercising, being active can also improve your sex life!

Let's take a look at how working out in the gym can improve your work outs in the bedroom.

While the type of working out you do varies person to person, what matters most is that you stay active, regardless of the means by which you do.

Cardiovascular exercise is great for your heart. It increases the rate at which blood pumps and flows throughout your body and improves circulation.

Lifting weights increases our growth hormone which in turn increases testosterone. The higher the testosterone, the higher the libido. Taking a yoga class can increase your flexibility which, needless to say, helps in the bedroom.

As we age, it's normal to experience sexual frustrations as a result of a lack of libido or issues such as erectile dysfunction.

Sexual frustrations can eventually lead to relationship issues, but exercise is a great way to help stop this slippery slope. **The boost in strength and endurance you will notice as a result of working out will translate into more endurance between the sheets.**

Endorphins and adrenaline rise as a result of working out and this can mean better and more frequent arousals and a greater sex drive.

In a study (1) done on the effect of an interval exercise workout routine and its relationship to erectile dysfunction in patients with high blood pressure, **findings suggested that erectile dysfunction decreased with the introduction of exercise routines.**

Because of this, it is safe to say that exercise serves as a great way to fight against ED without using prescription medications.

There's a saying that goes everything gets better with time. Sex shouldn't be an exception.

Sex in itself has health benefits that can reduce anxiety, release feel-good endorphins and even burn some calories!

As with any workout regimen, it is important to seek medical clearance from a doctor before beginning any exercise routine and to *slowly* add it into your daily routine. While there are sometimes sex-related issues that arise due to medications, there is certainly something to be said of a little exercise for a lot of pleasure in return.

- (1) Lamina, S., Okoye, C. G., & Dagogo, T. T. (2009).
Therapeutic effect of an interval exercise training program
in the management of erectile dysfunction in hypertensive

patients. *Journal of Clinical Hypertension (Greenwich, Conn.)*, 11(3), 125-129.

Conclusion – Live To Be A Young 100

Well, we've made it to the end of our introductory guide to fitness for seniors and baby boomers, hope you've enjoyed it.

Now, Looking to the future, while it's no secret that our genetics and perhaps even our luck plays a role in how long we'll live, there are certainly a ton of things we can do to increase our chances of living into a triple-digit-age.

Besides the cliché diet and exercise most people associate with longer lives, there are simple things we can do in our everyday lives to increase our chances of living longer.

Before our world's population was being knocked off far too soon by lifestyle-induced diseases such as cancers, heart attacks and stroke, living into a second century of life wasn't as unheard of as it is today.

Geriatrician, teacher and author Mark Lach's currently-oldest patient is 109 years old, lives at home and is a busy lady.

He attributes her longevity to genetics and her ability to pick herself back up after life's setbacks- a term referred to as adaptive competence. After all, living that long means you've seen your share of death, loss, and heartbreak. Your ability to move forward can play a part in how long you live.

Here's some more proof. Becca Levy, Epidemiology and Psychology Professor at Yale School of Public Health in Massachusetts, USA, did a study on longevity of individuals in their 50's.

Study subjects who related to statements such as "as you get older you are less useful," on average died seven-and-a-half years before those who disagreed with those pessimistic statements.

Seeing the glass half-full instead of half-empty may have more of an impact than we realize. Great advice for any stage of life.

While being optimistic is certainly a good trait to possess, standing alone it won't get you to seeing one-hundred candles on your birthday cake.

Living a healthy life is important just as well, with staying active being a big part of the equation.

Low-impact exercise that you enjoy doing is a better choice than higher-impact exercise that you don't look forward to due to its intense nature. The key is to find something you enjoy doing so that you stick to it. Think swimming, bike riding, walking and dancing.

In addition to being active, getting adequate sleep each night is important for longevity.

Our bodies repair during sleep, so it's important to get enough shut eye on a regular basis to allow this process to happen fully.

By getting adequate exercise and sleep, flexibility, awareness and balance increases which decreases your chance of having a debilitating fall due to lack of coordination, balance, or a foggy mind from a restless night.

As technology develops and medical breakthroughs abound, medications to treat diseases that have a low life expectancy rate increase.

Early detection tests and devices are more common and help diagnose cancers before they progress too far to treat.

Stem cell research is opening doors to curing diseases that before were deemed incurable.

Chemotherapy is being replaced more and more with targeted cancer therapies, which attack only the sick cells in the body instead of healthy ones as well.

Laparoscopic surgeries reduce the risk of surgery-related complications or death. The implementation of more smoke-free areas reduces the amount of toxins we are exposed to or breathe in.

The world as it is today is much different than it was a century ago. It's hard to tell what it will look like another hundred years from now. But if you have a great set of genetics, luck, and make the right choices towards a healthy lifestyle, you may find yourself being the next centenarian. Good luck for the journey and begin the fitness journey today!