

Tips to enjoy a lifestyle that can prevent premature aging

January 27 2015, by Ryann Nickerson



Credit: Peter Griffin/Public Domain

New Year's has become synonymous with a desire to change your lifestyle – in fact, 4 in 10 individuals have been said to made resolutions to lose weight. But what about individuals who are facing physical limitations to weight loss and other barriers to healthy living?

Amy Huebschmann, Ph.D. with the Center for Women's Health

Research at University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus states that exercise can promote healthy aging in individuals with [type 2 diabetes](#), and this week's Healthy Weight Week is a good opportunity to promote [fitness](#) for women of all ages. Keeping up good fitness levels is not just good for your waistline—it also lowers the risk of early death and protects against heart attacks and strokes. The U.S. Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend 2 ½ hours per week of moderate intensity [physical activity](#) such as [brisk walking](#).

Dr. Huebschmann's research and practice focuses on barriers to physical activity experienced by people with diabetes and older adults. "Studies have shown that people with diabetes have physical challenges that are barriers to exercise, but that when they overcome those barriers they attain tremendous health benefits," says Dr. Huebschmann. "Physical activity should be fun—people are more likely to be active if they find exercises that are personally rewarding, such as walking regularly or going to an exercise class."

While gradual declines in fitness with age are inevitable, fitness worsens more aggressively if a person does very little physical activity or has type 2 diabetes. For example, a sedentary person with type 2 diabetes generally has a 20% lower fitness level than a sedentary person without diabetes. Dr. Huebschmann notes, "The good news is that sedentary people with and without diabetes can improve their fitness levels and prevent heart attacks and strokes by starting a regular physical activity program."

Tips for older adults considering an exercise program:

1. A little goes a long way. Findings suggest that after as little as 12 weeks of regular exercise, fitness in people with type 2 diabetes can improve by as much as 40%.
2. Exercise can help to improve arthritis pain and function.

Exercise can help to improve arthritis pain and stiffness by "greasing the joints" as it renews the lubrication for the cartilage of the joint. In addition, regular physical activity can keep the muscles around arthritic joints more strong and may help control joint swelling.

3. I'm disabled. Even those who are wheelchair bound can and should get [exercise](#). Any activity that can increase your heart rate such as chair yoga and lifting weights can be beneficial. The U.S. Physical Activity guidelines recommend getting advice about starting a program, "People with disabilities are encouraged to get advice from professionals with experience in physical activity and disability because matching activity to abilities can require modifying physical activity in many different ways."
4. Use it or lose it – what if I've lost it? It is never too late to form healthy behavior patterns.

With an increasing number of individuals diagnosed with [diabetes](#) and living longer in worse health, the loss of fitness increases the risk of early death, heart attack, and stroke. Dr. Huebschmann says, "The key message is to find fun ways to be active for 2 ½ hours per week –such as 30 minutes per day on 5 days of the week. Your heart will thank you for it."

Provided by University of Colorado Denver

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