

Can you build muscle in old age? Yes, and an expert has tips

March 22 2024, by Ernie Mundell



If you're in your 60s, 70s or even older, you might think your days of

productively pumping iron are behind you.

That's just not true, said Dr. Adil Ahmed, an assistant professor in the Joseph Barnhart Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Building and maintaining muscle is a great way to stay all-round healthy, he said.

"The protective effect of muscle and [muscle mass](#) has been well studied—everything from the musculoskeletal system to orthopedics and even brain health," Ahmed said in a Baylor news release. "Building muscle in your body has been well shown to delay dementia and the effects of dementia and preserve cognitive function."

Don't forget [bone health](#), either: According to Ahmed, maintaining muscle is the only thing proven to help aging bones stay dense and strong.

"It's a very good protective long-term process," he said.

However, if you're thinking of engaging into a late-life weight-lifting regimen, be sure to first consult with an expert—a [personal trainer](#) or a trusted friend who already understands the process.

Ahmed recommends starting first with controlled [resistance training](#) and then moving to free weights, with an emphasis on building good (and safe) technique.

"In my opinion, [free weights](#) are the best for muscle building because of the force you exert with your muscles," he said. "There's also a balance component that stabilizes the muscles and works your core."

Be sure to get evaluated by a doctor before commencing with any weight-training regimen in the senior years. However, with the proper guidance, weight training can even be healthy for folks battling [chronic conditions](#) of aging such as [heart failure](#), Ahmed said, because it gets the heart pumping.

"When you lift weights, you need the heart to pump hard to allow blood flow to travel to the muscles because that's the only way nutrients get there, and it's the only way muscles stay active and can exert before fatigue," he explained. "It's cardioprotective in the sense that your heart gets conditioned to pump harder."

The bottom line, according to Ahmed: Seniors, don't be afraid of the weight room.

"It's just very good overall for one's health," he said.

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