



EXERCISE AND STAYING ACTIVE



You don't need to buy special clothes or belong to a gym to become more active. Physical activity can and should be part of your everyday life! Find things you like to do. Go for brisk walks. Ride a bike. Dance. Work around the house. Garden. Climb stairs. Swim. Try different activities that keep you moving. Look for new ways to build activity into your daily routine.

Four Ways to Be Active

To get all of the benefits of physical activity, try all four types of exercise: 1) endurance, 2) strength, 3) balance, and 4) flexibility.

1. Try to build up to at least 30 minutes of activity that makes you breathe hard on most days of the week. That's called an **endurance** activity because it builds your energy and works your heart muscle, preventing heart disease. You don't have to be active for 30 minutes all at once- you can exercise ten minutes three times a day to make it easier! How hard do you need to push yourself? If you can talk without any trouble at all, you aren't working hard enough. If you can't talk at all, you may be working too hard.
2. Keep using your muscles. **Strength** exercises build muscles. When you have strong muscles, you can get up from a chair by yourself, you can lift your grandchildren, and you can walk through the park. Keeping your muscles in shape helps prevent falls that cause problems like broken hips. You are less likely to fall when your leg and hip muscles are strong.
3. Do things to help your **balance**. Try standing on one foot, then the other. If you can, don't hold on to anything for support. Get up from a chair without using your hands or arms. Every now and then walk heel-to-toe. As you walk, put the heel of one foot just in front of the toes of your other foot. Your heel and toes should touch or almost touch.
4. Stretching can improve your **flexibility**. Moving more freely will make it easier for you to reach down to tie your shoes or look over your shoulder when you back the car out of your driveway. Stretch when your muscles are warmed up. Don't stretch so far that it hurts.

Who Should Exercise?

Almost anyone, at any age, can do physical activity. You can still exercise even if you have a health condition like heart disease or diabetes. In fact, physical activity can help. For most older adults, brisk walking, riding a bike, swimming, weight lifting, and gardening are safe, especially if you build up slowly. But, check with your doctor prior to beginning any new high energy activity.

Safety Tips

- Start slowly, especially if you haven't been active for a long time. Little by little build up your activities and how hard you work at them.
- Don't hold your breath during exercise. That could cause changes in your blood pressure. It may seem strange at first, but the rule is to breathe out as you lift something; breathe in as you relax and try to keep steady breathing in any exercise.
- Use safety equipment. For example, wear a helmet for bike riding or the right shoes for walking or jogging.
- Unless your doctor has asked you to limit fluids, be sure to drink plenty when you are doing activities. Many older adults don't feel thirsty even if their body needs fluids.
- Always bend forward from the hips, not the waist. If you keep your back straight, you're probably bending the right way. If your back "humps," that's probably wrong.
- Warm up your muscles before you stretch. Try walking and light arm pumping first.

Exercise should not hurt or make you feel really tired. You might feel some soreness, a little discomfort, or a bit weary, but you should not feel pain. In fact, in many ways, being active will make you feel better!

Looking for more information on how to exercise safely?

The Chatham County Council on Aging also offers the *A Matter of Balance* (falls prevention) and weekly exercise classes at their Eastern and Western Centers. To join the Council on Aging, call or visit one of the centers today!

Eastern Chatham Senior Center-(919) 542-4512 365 Highway 87 N, Pittsboro, NC 27312

Western Chatham Senior Center-(919) 742-3975 112 Village Lake Road, Siler City, NC, 27344

Chatham County Council on Aging Website: <https://chathamcouncilonaging.org/>

Visit www.nihseniorhealth.gov, a senior-friendly website from the National Institute on Aging and the National Library of Medicine. Special features make it simple to use. For example, you can click on a button to have the text read out loud or to make the type larger.

*Is information on this flyer incorrect or outdated? If so, please report it to (919) 542-4512.