

Stay Healthy – Stay Independent!

For a frail person, the main goal is to be as independent as possible. The way to do this is to increase strength, maintain balance, focus on flexibility, and increase endurance.

Did you know?

Habit is the single best predictor of inactivity. Often a lifetime of ingrained behavior must be overcome. Incorporating exercise as part of a previously established routine will make it easier to remember to exercise. Include simple exercises in a daily routine to meet goals!

- For a frail person, just working on getting up and down out of a chair unassisted is using muscles that need to be exercised.
- Focus first on individual goals for each person, his or her concerns, and any barriers that prevent the exercise.

Note: If exercise results in chest pain, dizziness, cold sweats, extreme breathlessness, or very rapid heart rate that lasts longer than 5 to 10 minutes after stopping activity, consult a physician.

Tips for incorporating exercise into daily activities:

- Exercise in short, 10-minute bouts.
- Set a schedule. The key is to set aside specific days and times for exercise, making it just as much a regular part of a daily schedule as everything else.
- Wear comfortable clothes that don't restrict movement.
- Wear leg warmers or over-the-knee socks that can help prevent sore muscles in the lower leg.
- If a movement causes pain, stop! The old adage "No pain, no gain," is not true.

Remember...

The goals are to increase strength, maintain balance, focus on flexibility, and increase endurance:

Strength Training

- Include a single set of 10 to 15 repetitions using 8 to 10 different exercises, performed 2 to 3 times per week.
- Each repetition should be performed slowly, through a full range of motion while avoiding holding one's breath.
- The exercise program should involve all major muscle groups.

Balance and Flexibility

- Stretch major muscle groups once per day after exercise when muscles are more compliant.
- Incorporate a balance training and weight transfer program twice per week.

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Endurance

- Engage in moderate aerobic activity for a combined total of at least 30 minutes, most days of the week.
- Individual bouts of activity may be as brief as 10 minutes.

Common Barriers to Exercise: How to Approach

Barrier	Approach
Self-efficacy	Begin slowly with exercises that are easily accomplished; advance gradually; provide frequent encouragement.
Attitude	Promote positive personal benefits of exercise; identify enjoyable activities.
Discomfort	Vary intensity and range of exercise; employ cross-training; start slowly; avoid overdoing.
Disability	Specialized exercises; consider personal trainer or physical therapist.
Poor balance / ataxia	Assistive devices can increase safety as well as increase exercise intensity.
Fear of injury	Balance and strength training initially; use of appropriate clothing, equipment, and supervision; start slowly.
Habit	Incorporate into daily routine; repeat encouragement; promote active lifestyle.*
Subjective norms	Identify and recruit influential others; education of patient and influential family/friends.
Fixed income	Walking and other simple exercises; use of household items; promote active lifestyle.*
Inclement weather	Walk in the mall; use senior centers; promote active lifestyle.*
Cognitive decline	Incorporate into daily routine; keep exercises simple.
Illness / fatigue	Use a range of exercises/intensities that patients can match to their varying energy level.

** Examples of an active lifestyle include using a golf pull cart while golfing, using a push mower, participating in activities such as stand and cast fishing or gardening, and taking the stairs.*

When should a doctor be consulted?

If muscles or joints are sore the day after exercising, too much exercise may have been done. Next time, exercise at a lower intensity. If the pain or discomfort persists, talk to the doctor. Also talk to the doctor if any of the following symptoms are experienced while exercising:

- chest pain or pressure
- trouble breathing or excessive shortness of breath
- light-headedness or dizziness
- difficulty with balance
- nausea

Tips courtesy of the American Academy of Family Physicians, American College of Sports Medicine and the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics