



Exercising in an Anti-Aging World

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We've all heard about the multitude of anti-aging products that cost, well, an arm and a leg only to promise they'll take years off our appearance. Have you thought about spending no money (or just a few dollars) and achieving the same thing by exercising? Physical inactivity is one of the major risk factors for heart attacks. The lack of exercise leads to weakness, increasing your chances of falling and increasing the amount of your medical bills. If you exercise it may delay, manage or prevent many health problems such as diabetes, some cancers, cholesterol build-up, depression and heart problems, just to name a few.

If you're currently inactive and want to start exercising you might want to consult with your physician before starting an exercise program or significantly increasing your physical activity. It's never too late to start exercising. Many older adults don't start exercising until they're retired. However the older you are the more regular movement you need. Most of today's retirement centers and homes have such an abundance of activities to choose from it's hard to decide which activities to participant in!

Make note of your plans and goals for health success and put them into action! Team with a friend or two. If you like a little competition have each person chart what they've done within the month, review the results and provide non-judgmental feedback to help one-another achieve each of their fitness goals.

Choose which activities you want to try. Make sure you change your activities every few months so your muscles don't plateau and, most of all, so that you don't quit because you're bored with your routine. You may not want to exercise but you need to fit exercise into your schedule to ensure your muscles grow stronger and you don't become dependent on others.

Pick the best time to workout, then mix it in with your daily routine. Take the stairs instead of the elevator or park your car a little further from your office or errands, burning extra calories and slowly increasing your cardio requirements. Adding that extra kick to your step will lead you to a longer and healthier life: boosting your energy level, promoting better sleep and decreasing your medical bills.

Try starting your routine with 30 minutes of aerobic activity (walking, bicycling,

ballroom dancing, or swimming) three times a week and muscle-strengthening activities on two days a week, which work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms). The increase in activity will stimulate the endorphins, which improve your mood and make you happier and more relaxed.

There are many ways you can strengthen your muscles: lifting light weights, working with resistance bands, or using your own body weight for resistance (as is usually done in yoga classes).

You can't do anything about yesterday, but upgrading your exercise habits today will lead to a healthier and happier tomorrow!

Source: Kristen Heim is a long-time resident of Fairfax County. She teaches beginner and advanced yoga classes to the general adult population at Hollin Hall Senior Center and Kingstowne Center for Active Adults. Consultations and the first class are free -- and it's not only for seniors. Visit www.fierysunfitness.com or call (703) 863-3607 for more information.