

Smart Choices

Nutrition News for Seniors

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Physical Activity

You have probably heard that physical activity, including exercise, is good for you. Regular exercise and physical activity are important to both the physical and mental health of everyone including older adults. Being physically active can help you continue to do the things you enjoy and maintain your independence as you age. Older adults should strive to be active every day in order to maintain their health and reduce the risk of some diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

There are many ways to be physically active. You can be active in short spurts throughout the day or set aside specific times of the day to exercise. Many physical activities, such as brisk walking, raking leaves or taking the stairs, are free and do not require special equipment. Even if you have difficulty standing or walking, you can still find activities to do in a seated position and benefit from it. Find something you enjoy doing, include it in your regular routine, and try to increase your level of activity over time.

Exercise and physical activity can make it easier for you to perform everyday tasks such as vacuum-



ing, playing with grandchildren, carrying baskets of laundry or bags of groceries. Improving your flexibility and balance through regular physical activity can also help reduce the risk of falls. Any one of these benefits is worth making time for physical activity each day.

The key to beginning an exercise or physical activity routine is to know your starting point and build slowly from there. This will help you pick activities that are comfortable and realistic for you. Set some short and long term goals for yourself based on your current level of physical activity. If you are already active, think of short term goals to increase your level of physical activity. If you have not been physically active,

check with your physician to get his/her recommendations and find out if there are any activities you should avoid.

If you choose to begin an exercise program, your shoes are an important part of your physical activity routine. Choose shoes that are made for the type of physical activity you want to do (walking, tennis, dancing, etc.) Look for shoes with non-skid soles, good heel support, enough room for your toes, and a cushioned arch that is not too high or thick. Make sure your shoes fit well and provide proper support for your feet. This is particularly important if you have diabetes or arthritis.

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