



A Program of Senior Services, Inc. of Wichita
Phone: (316) 267-0302 Fax: (316) 267-0805

WALKING FOR FITNESS

by Michael E. Rogers, Ph.D. and Ruth Bohlken, M.Ed.,
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Walking is a natural, inexpensive and healthy way to exercise your heart, and improve circulation. It's easy on the joints, with low risk of injury. These basics can help you begin or continue a walking program.

- Select comfortable, well fitting shoes, with rubber or crepe soles and good arch support.
- A laced shoe offers better foot support.
- Select leather or nylon mesh uppers and cotton socks to let your foot breathe.
- Select a ½ inch elevated heel, which acts as a cushion for shock absorption.
- Keep toenails properly trimmed.
- Cushion and protect corns and calluses.
- Walk briskly enough to comfortably deepen breathing and increase heart rate.
- Take full breaths and exhale completely.
- Stand tall: shoulders back, stomach in.
- Land on the heel of your foot, roll forward to the ball of foot, push off toes.
- Stride evenly, arms swinging freely.

Start with a 5, 10 or 15 minute walk every day, and increase walking time and speed as your fitness improves.

Animals benefit from exercise too, so walking your pet can be part of your routine. Have fun and make daily walks a habit.

For more information contact Michael E. Rogers, Ph.D., telephone: 316-978-5959, email: mrogers@twsu.edu or Ruth Bohlken, M.Ed., telephone: 316-978-5150, email: bohlken@twsu.edu; or visit Center for Physical Activity & Aging: <http://www.twsu.edu/~cpaa>.

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EXERCISE & ARTHRITIS

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Many older adults have some form of chronic arthritis. Doctors and physical therapists think that a person with arthritis can reduce symptoms and have better health by exercising. Regular exercise can:

- Help keep joints moving and flexible.
- Keep muscles around joints strong.
- Improve ability to do everyday activities.
- Improve general health by increasing stamina.
- Help control weight, thus relieving joints.
- Help keep bones from becoming brittle.

An exercise program that uses a variety of activities like walking, cycling, swimming, and strength and conditioning exercises works well for people with arthritis. Suggestions for a balanced program are:

- Flexibility or range-of motion exercises help keep joints flexible and fit.
- Exercises using weights or resistance bands help strengthen muscles that support joints.
- T'ai chi uses slow graceful movements that help improve balance and range of motion.
- Bicycling helps improve fitness without much stress to hips, knees and feet.
- Exercising in warm water is very good for stiff sore joints and relaxes muscles.
- Walking is easy on joints and a very good way to improve fitness.

Try a mix of activities and do something different every few days.

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EXERCISE YOUR BRAIN

by Michael E. Rogers, Ph.D. and Ruth Bohlken, M.Ed.,
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Most of us have heard the expression, “Use it or lose it.” This is true of the human brain. Any activities that offer good mental workouts will keep your brain healthy and alert. A few are listed below:

- Doing crossword and jigsaw puzzles.
- Playing bridge.
- Learning a foreign language.
- Playing a musical instrument.
- Learning dance steps, yoga or t'ai chi.
- Writing.
- Taking classes and learning new skills.
- Traveling.
- Experiencing the new and unfamiliar.

Reducing stress and having a positive attitude can help keep your brain healthy. You can reduce stress with meditation, yoga, or exercise. Some traits of a positive life style are:

- Ability to adapt to life's events.
- Good coping skills.
- Good sense of humor, can laugh at self.
- Religious or spiritual belief.
- Strong connections with other people.

A low-fat nutritious diet, adequate exercise, and avoidance of smoking and heavy drinking help to keep your brain and body healthy.

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BALANCE

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Maintaining good balance is important to avoid falls and broken bones. Those who stay physically fit generally have better balance than less active peers.

Both kinds of balance, static and dynamic, are important in day-to-day activities.

- Static balance - ability to hold a position with little or no movement.
- Dynamic balance – constant redistribution of body weight while walking, rising from a chair, etc.

Maintaining or improving balance is possible at any age. Here are a few tips that can help

- Have regular eye exams and get treatment for cataracts and glaucoma.
- Get medical attention for inner ear disorders.
- Alcohol, sedatives, antidepressants and cold remedies can impair your ability to react. Ask your doctor if your drugs or drug combinations have these side effects, and how to reduce them.
- You should be able to stand on one foot for 10 seconds. Practice standing on one foot while working at the sink or standing in front of a chair.
- Build leg strength if your leg muscles are weak.
- Weight training to improve balance and strength.
- T'ai chi, yoga and physical therapy can improve balance.

People with good balance can be more independent and continue the daily activities that make life enjoyable.

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EXERCISE FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE

by Pat Healy, L.S.C.S.W.,
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Visually impaired people may find that in addition to age related loss of mobility, pain, stiffness, or loss of strength, other roadblocks exist that make exercising difficult.

These difficulties may discourage people with vision problems from trying to exercise. A realistic approach to exercise can eliminate roadblocks and promote a healthier body.

Check with local medical facilities, health clubs, Y's, senior centers, etc. to see if they offer special programs or assistance for visually impaired people. If special programs are not available, request them and encourage other visually impaired people to do the same.

Ask your doctor if physical therapy can help you learn activities to increase your fitness, and if your insurance covers them. You can also:

- Find an "exercise buddy" or an exercise group to avoid boredom and provide safety.
- If you prefer exercising alone, walk in your driveway, backyard, or on a treadmill.
- Climb your stairs several times a day. Use the handrail and make sure steps are clear.

Vary your activities:

- Use a stationary bike, rowing machine, etc.
- Trying other forms of exercise like exercise bands, small hand weights, yoga or T'ai Chi.
- Exercise to music, or listen to your favorite TV or radio program while you exercise.
- Use the time for creative thinking.

The benefits of physical activity are worth your effort.

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FLEXIBILITY & FITNESS

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Flexibility, a very important component of body fitness, is the ability to move joints in a full range of motion. With age, changes in bone, muscle, and connective tissue in the joint can cause loss of flexibility, stiffness, and pain can occur, adding to flexibility problems.

When the body loses flexibility, simple actions become difficult, for instance:

- If shoulder flexibility is affected, reaching for objects or combing your hair become difficult.
- If leg and hip flexibility are affected then walking, stair climbing or rising from a chair are harder.
- Low flexibility puts people at risk for falls.

A simple daily stretching routine can:

- Improve range of motion and flexibility.
- Promote circulation.
- Prevent injury when moving about.
- Prepare muscles for more brisk activity.

Check with your doctor before you begin. Start slowly and build your stretching routine as flexibility improves. Remember:

- Stretch slowly, breathe normally, never bounce.
- Feel the stretch, but don't strain.
- Get into the habit of stretching every day.

You can stretch to improve your fitness, in your own home with no special equipment, even sitting in a chair.

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