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Staying Fit At Any Age

Starting healthy habits early can help stave off many age-related health conditions. Here are some decade-based tips from physical therapists.



2 Tips for 20s:

1. Be active 30 minutes per day to make it a habit for life. Regular exercise in the present is a great way to keep serious health issues such as heart disease and diabetes out of your future.

2. Did you realize bones begin losing density in your mid-20s? Then put down your smartphone and get up and move! Dance. Jump rope. Run. Weight-bearing exercises are key to avoiding osteoporosis later in life.

3 Tips for 30s:

1. Feeling pressed for time? Chances are you're being asked to do more at work and at home. But

this isn't the time to cut corners with your health. Make sure you continue to eat well, get adequate sleep, and exercise regularly.

2. Saving for retirement? Adopt the same attitude about your long-term health. Just like a financial planner can make sure you're putting enough money in the bank, a physical therapist can evaluate your current weaknesses and outline a plan to make them future strengths.

3. Testing your physical limits? Many people in their 30s challenge themselves with road races, bike rides, and obstacle courses. These activities are an excellent way to stay motivated and active. But be sensible, too. Ease into new routines and allow your body time to adjust to stresses that could lead to injury.

4 Tips for 40s:

1. Stand up for your health! Some inactivity researchers believe that prolonged sitting is so detrimental to your health that exercise doesn't offset its negative effects. So get up from sitting at least once an hour, and more if you can.

2. It's time to diversify. Does your exercise routine include aerobic exercise, strength training, and flexibility activities? If not, have a physical therapist evaluate you and make recommendations for safely addressing areas you're neglecting.

3. Women who experience bladder leakage after childbirth should know that urinary incontinence is common but not normal. It's treatable, too. Find a physical therapist who specializes in women's health.

4. Don't start acting "over the hill." Sure, aches and pains may increase in your 40s. But that doesn't mean you have to live with them. Act your age by doing something about it. Physical therapists can often treat your pain without the need for surgery or long-term use of prescription medication. What are you waiting for?

5 Tips for 50s:

1. See the world, and exercise, too. Traveling for work or pleasure shouldn't derail your healthy habits. Physical therapists can suggest exercises you can do on the go, anywhere.

2. Bone up on your bone health. Menopause contributes to increased loss of bone density, making bones more brittle and prone to breaking. The older you get, the more important it becomes to get the recommended amount of calcium and vitamin D, and perform weight-bearing or resistance exercises 30-60 minutes at least 3 times per week.

3. Imitate a flamingo. If you can't stand on one leg for 5-10 seconds, that's a sign your balance needs immediate improvement. Don't let a fall be your wake-up call.

4. Be active every day. The older you get, the more important it becomes to be vigilant about your health. Each week, you want 2.5 hours of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity, 1.25 hours of vigorous-intensity activity, or an equivalent combination of the two. The best way to do that is to strive for activity every day.

5. Get a second opinion. People in their 50s often experience the first major signs of aging. If you've tried to manage your health on your own thus far, now is the time to get off of the Internet and in front of a physical therapist, who can provide an expert assessment of your health that will be key to your ability to maintain your independence.

6 Tips for 60s and Beyond:

1. Take the pressure off. Regular physical activity is more crucial than ever, but if aches and pains are making walking or jogging a chore, move some of your exercise to a pool, where you can work just as hard with less pounding. (Oh, and see a physical therapist about those aches and pains!)

2. Get balanced. One-third of adults over age 65 are likely to fall each year, and those falls will lead to more than 700,000 hospitalizations. Unfortunately, too many people realize they are falls-prone when they experience their first fall.

3. Be proactive. See a physical therapist for a balance assessment and a personalized improvement program. Preserve your mental health with physical activity. People who are physically active—even later in life—are less likely to develop memory problems or Alzheimer's disease.

4. Maintain your intensity! Studies show that people in their 60s, 70s, and even 80s and older can make improvements in strength and physical function, which is associated with improved health and quality of life. But that can't happen unless your physical activity is intense enough to produce gains in muscle strength.

5. Don't do this alone. A physical therapist can prescribe an exercise dosage adequate enough to generate results. Strive for 60 minutes. Not the TV show! Set a goal to be physically active 60 minutes a day. You don't have to do it all once. Ten-minute increments count, too.

6. Team up. If you're retired, what better way to stay close to longtime colleagues than to make time to walk together? Whatever the activity, doing things as a team will keep you accountable and provide social interaction.

Are you looking for more ideas or wanting one-on-one coaching to jump-start your fitness plan? Go to pearsonpt.com for more information on our Performance Training or check out our FREE Stride clinics that are held once a month.