

Avoiding Injury as You Age

As we age, it's normal to move slower, have less energy, and feel weaker than we did when we were younger. These factors also make us more susceptible to injury. One of the most common reasons for emergency room visits in adults over the age of 65 is falls. Falls are also the leading cause of death for this population.

Reduced levels of physical activity are the most common cause of reduced strength and coordination throughout your lifespan. Therefore, establishing a regular exercise practice is even more important as you age.

Reducing your risk of injury as you get older is possible if you maintain a healthy and active lifestyle. Here are some helpful ways to improve your strength and coordination:

- **Participate in aerobic exercise.** Take a brisk walking, jog, bike, swim, or participate in an aerobic class at least 30 minutes per day, five days per week. Mix up the activities throughout the week to prevent stagnation.
- **Participate in exercise that helps with strength, balance, and flexibility.** Examples of these exercises include yoga, tai chi, Pilates, or isometric weightlifting. It is recommended to practice these activities two hours per week.
- **Play sports.** Sports help codify the aerobic, strength, balance, and flexibility that you have been practicing. Besides, a little competition can build confidence and comradery.
- **Work with a trainer.** Having someone to design work outs based on your ability and push you, can make a big difference in getting the kind of results that you desire.
- **Don't ignore illnesses.** Work with your doctor to treat illnesses that can interfere with your ability to exercise. Don't forget about specialty care like podiatry, eye problems, hearing, dental, etc.
- **Eat healthy.** Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and lean protein, including beans and other legumes, nuts and seeds, and healthy fats. Recommendations say to eat 2.5 servings of vegetables, 2 servings of fruits, 6 servings of grains, 3 servings of dairy, and 1 serving of lean protein per day.
- **Get enough sleep.** Sleep is not optional! Humans have evolved to function best when we get between 7 and 9hrs of sleep within a 24hr period. The purpose of sleep is extremely important to human health. Sleep not only aids in memory storage, but also accelerates your body's ability to repair itself and recover from injury.

While it's not possible to completely prevent an age-related injury, following the recommendations above can greatly reduce the risk.

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