



**Fitness**  
for Seniors



# Live Healthy, Live Longer

According to the Mayo Clinic, less than 3 percent of Americans meet the basic qualifications for a “healthy lifestyle.”

Another report published by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine asserts that Americans’ health ranks below 16 other developed countries.

We can do better than this. The good news is that living healthy is (mostly) in your control. Before we can improve, it is important to understand the current state of our health.

This is what we know, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

- Less than 5 percent of adults participate in 30 minutes of physical activity every day.

- Only 40 percent of adults 75 years of age and older are physically active in any capacity.

- An older adult is treated in the emergency room for injuries related to falls every 15 seconds.

- Every 29 minutes, a senior adult dies following a fall.

- Approximately 90 percent of Americans consume more sodium than is recommended for a healthy diet.

- If Americans reduced their



sodium intake by just 1,200 mg per day, more than \$20 billion could be saved in medical costs each year.

Here are some statistics from the National Council on Aging:

- Approximately 80 percent

of older adults have at least one chronic disease — and 77 percent have more than one.

- 90 percent of Americans age 55 and older are at risk for high blood pressure.

- Approximately 20 percent

of senior Americans suffer from depression but only 3 percent receive treatment.

- Studies show exercising your brain is just as important as exercising your body as you age. The longer you stay a stu-

dent, the more likely you are to ward off dementia.

- It is important to keep your thoughts positive. Those who worry about falling tend to fall more often than those who don't.

# Find Your Balance

**P**ersonal balance is often taken for granted, but it is a fundamental quality of daily life.

According to the Center for Disease Control, 2.5 million older Americans are treated each year in the emergency room for injuries caused by falling.

Therefore, improving your balance is an essential component of preventative care.

## LOSING YOUR BALANCE

Seniors most commonly lose their balance due to:

- Poor vision;
- Weakened joints;
- Poor posture;
- Dragging feet;
- Increased dizziness; or
- Delayed responsiveness.

Many of the above afflictions come as part of the natural aging process, but this does not mean you can't work to improve your balance.

## REGAINING YOUR BALANCE

The good news is your balance can be strengthened and regained through training. Much of our balance is lost as we age due to inactivity.

Simple stretching and sports, such as yoga or Pilates, are easy and effec-

tive ways to retrain your body and regain balance you once had.

## CHAIR EXERCISES

If you are looking for something you can do a little each day (without a yoga mat) then grab a chair. Standing directly behind it, rest one hand on the back of the chair and the other on your hip.

Lift one leg, bending your knee slightly. Hold this leg up for a count of 10, bring it back down to the floor for a moment of rest, and then repeat. Do nine additional repetitions on that side, before repeating the exercise with your other leg.

## INCREASE YOUR FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility plays a large role in maintaining and strengthening your balance. Have you noticed it's not as easy to complete everyday tasks, such as reaching for items on high shelves or bending over to put on shoes?

Stretching for 10 minutes each day will vastly improve your range of motion. Just be sure not to over extend yourself. Stretching should produce a nice pull — never pain.



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# Practice Fitness Safety

**F**itness isn't all fun and games without the proper safety precautions. While every person should consider the same basic safety concerns, as we age, our bodies need a little extra care.

Being aware of potential threats allows everyone to exercise safely.

## HEART HEALTH

Your heart is responsible for sending oxygen-rich blood throughout your body. Aging can cause changes in your heart. It cannot beat as fast as it once did in times of stress or physical activity.

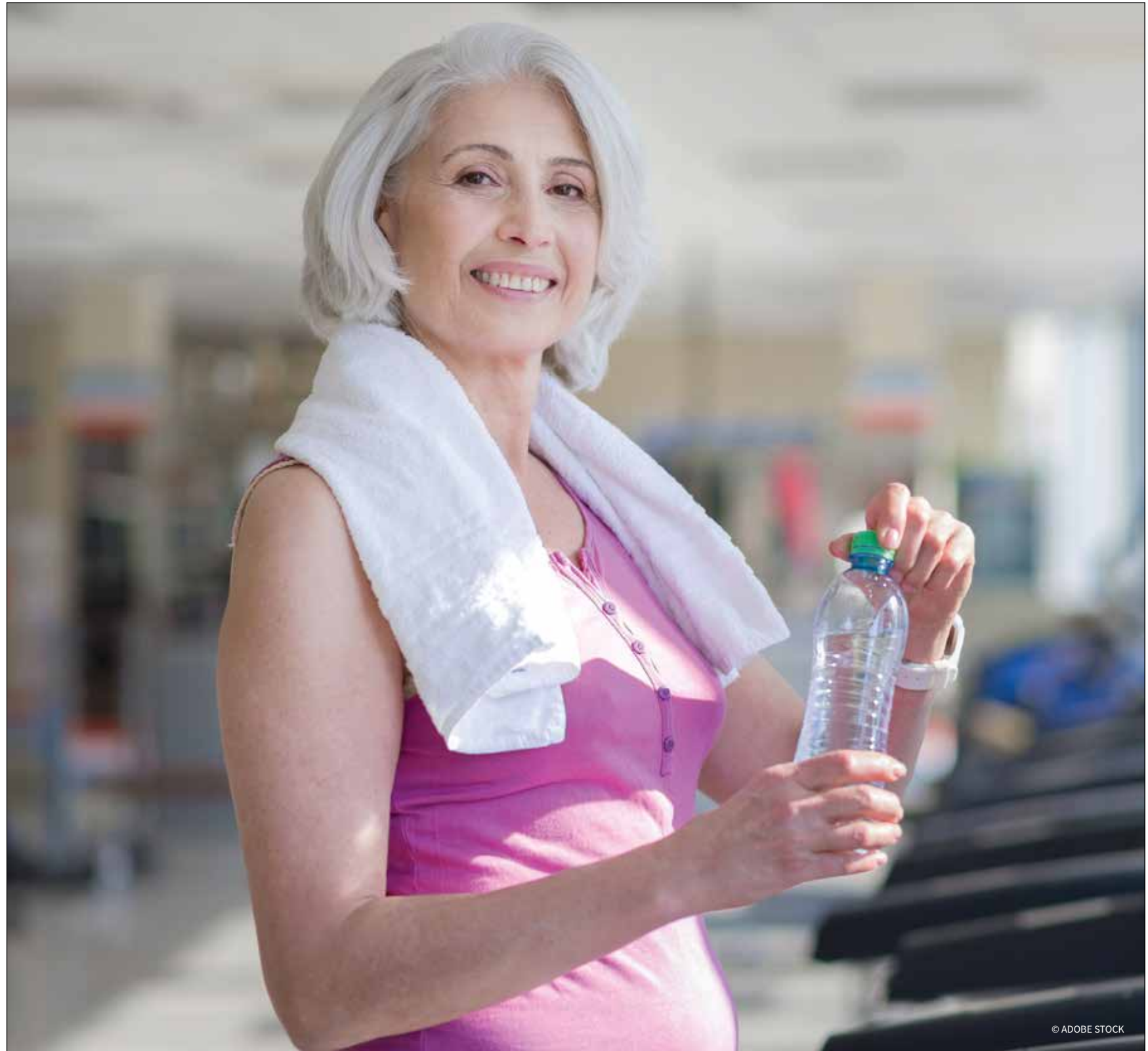
This is what causes us to feel tired more quickly. It is a good idea to keep an eye on your heart rate before, during and after physical activity. Most activity trackers on the market have a heart rate monitoring function, which makes this easy.

## STAYING HYDRATED

Proper hydration is the most crucial aspect of engaging in physical activity. After all, the human body is comprised of more than 60 percent water — and we lose it constantly through breathing, urinating and perspiring.

But it is often neglected in everyday life, much less when people exert themselves. According to Medical Daily, approximately 75 percent of the American population is functioning in a chronic state of dehydration. Stay hydrated by taking a water bottle with you wherever you go, and add flavoring if it helps you drink more.

Take regular breaks from activity to drink water. Set a timer if you tend to



get distracted easily.

## SUN CONCERNS

Sun exposure can trigger all sorts of problems for people — especially

during times of heightened activity. The sun can make us hot, which causes our body temperature and blood pressure to rise.

It is important to not only take regu-

lar breaks when engaging in physical activity, but to rest in shaded areas. Be sure to also apply sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher before going outside to protect skin from unnecessary burns.

# Activity Tracker Benefits

Tracking habits has become quite the rage — from sleep to water consumption to steps taken. It’s really no surprise that activity trackers have become an essential fitness accessory.

If you’ve been on the fence about investing in one, consider the following six benefits of adding an activity tracker to your fitness regime.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Fitness trackers are a great way to not only keep track of your activity but your progress as well.

Making strides in your fitness journey is necessary for steady improvement in your physical health.

## PERSONALIZED GOALS

Activity trackers allow you to set, work toward and meet your own personal fitness goals. Your friends might be making 10,000 steps a day, but if you are just beginning your fitness journey, you might not be ready for that.

Activity trackers let you set goals you can increase gradually. You also can evaluate where you’re beginning. You might be doing better than you think.

## ROI MOTIVATION

One potential drawback of most activity trackers is cost. They can get pricey. This investment, however, can provide quite the motivation to take advantage of all your tracker’s benefits.



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Activity trackers allow you to set, work toward and meet your own personal fitness goals.

By striving to get the most out of your money, you can develop healthy habits that will become second nature.

## HEART HEALTH AWARENESS

Many activity tracker models include continuous and automatic heart rate tracking — straight from your wrist.

This can help you both make sure

you work hard enough during physical activity and make sure you don’t overdo it.

## REMINDERS

A reminders feature can be invaluable to those striving to fight a sedentary lifestyle.

If you’ve been stationary for a certain amount of time, many trackers will give you friendly reminders to get

up and move.

## FASHIONABLE FITNESS

This feature might be less important to some than others, but activity trackers have gone great lengths toward making fitness fashionable.

Many come with interchangeable accessories, so that bands can be exchanged to suit any occasion.



# Add Strength Training

**S**trength training can improve your joint health, balance and stability.

While everyone can benefit from strength training, it is especially valuable for women — who already struggle with lower muscle mass and bone density.

In fact, strength-training exercises are one of the best preventative measures for many chronic diseases and common complaints. Added bonus: Strength-training can be done in the comfort of your own home with little to no financial investment in less than 15 minutes per day.

## WHY CONSIDER DUMBBELLS?

Dumbbells offer personalization and flexibility to a strength-training program — which is ideal for seniors. They can be used in a variety of ways to strengthen the upper and lower body.

Dumbbells come in different weights and can be used in the comfort of your own home. They also can be purchased as a set or individually so you can get as few (or as many) as you like.

## SETS AND REPETITIONS

In weight training, every-

thing is done in “repetitions” and “sets.” A repetition is one completion of an exercise, and a set is a group of repetitions.

Choose a dumbbell that challenges you but is light enough to engage in 10 repetitions without resting. You should be challenged enough so that your last repetition is difficult (but not impossible) to complete. If you’re just beginning, start with one of the following two routines:

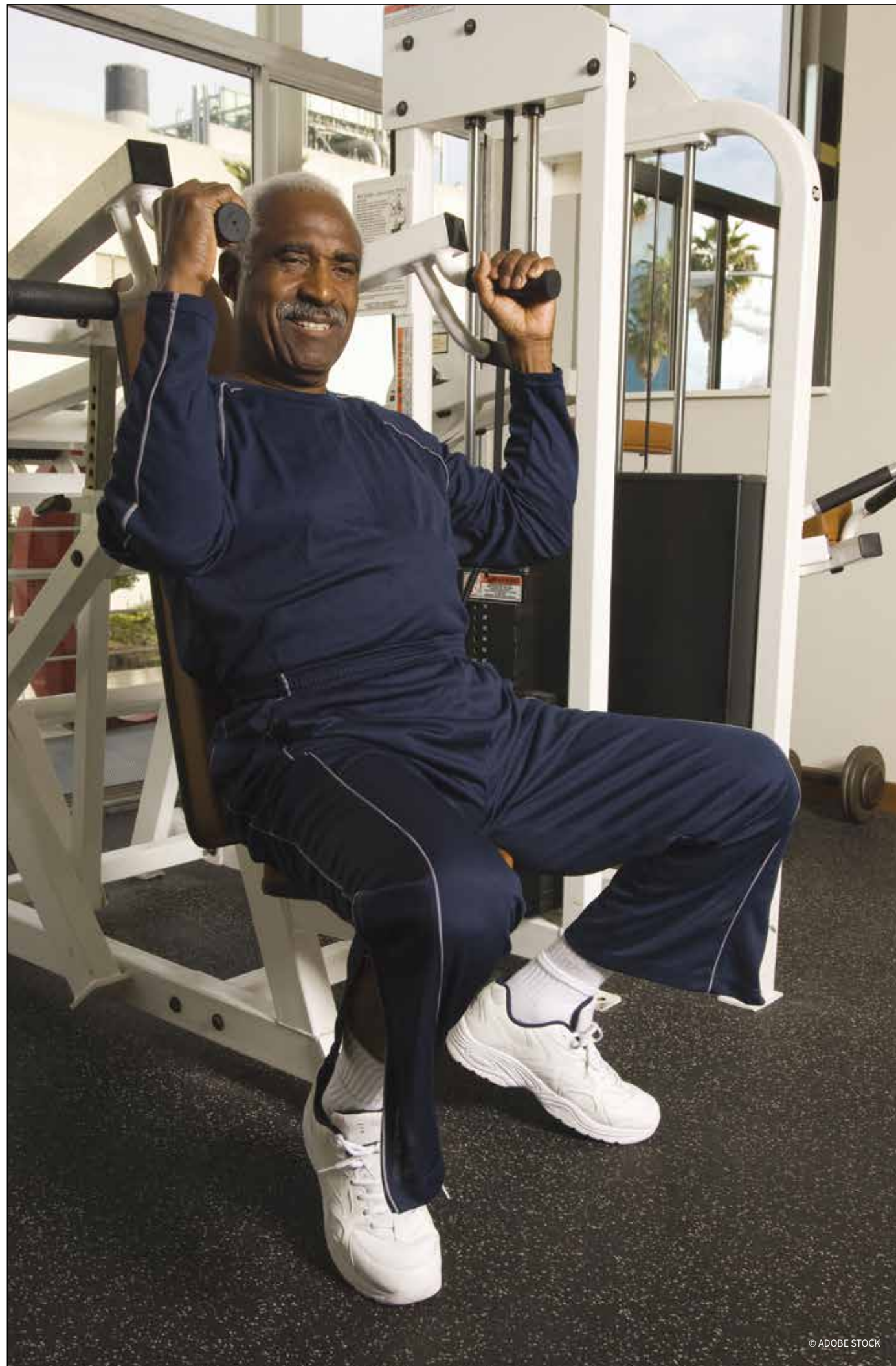
**Arm curl:** Begin by holding the dumbbells with your arms resting at your sides. Slowly bend your elbows until the dumbbells reach your shoulders. Hold for a count of three and then relax.

**Overhead press:** Start by holding the dumbbells at chest height with your elbows bent, and then slowly extend your arms above your head. Hold for a count of three and then lower to the starting position.

## TAKE PROPER PRECAUTIONS

Before engaging in any sort of strength training, get clearance from your doctor. Be sure to ask about any medications you are taking to ensure any necessary adjustments.

You should also drink plenty of water during any exercise regimen and stop immediately if you start to feel pain.





# Gym Membership Basics

The prospect of joining a gym might be a more intimidating prospect for seniors than it once was. A gym membership can come with many benefits — as long as you do your research.

## CHOOSE YOUR PACE

The most obvious benefits of a gym membership is the variety of equipment and fitness resources you would have access to. This is especially great for seniors, as you can focus on the areas of your body that need the most conditioning, and work at a pace that is comfortable for you.

Want to walk? Hop on a treadmill or log a few laps on an indoor track. Do your feet bother you when you walk? A cycling machine might be just the ticket.

Most gyms also have an aquatics center and offer many classes, if group activity is what you enjoy.

## TRY NEW THINGS

Speaking of group classes, fitness classes through a gym are a wonderful way to try out new activities. And with a membership, most gyms will allow you to transfer your class fee to another activity if you find a certain fitness class is not



for you.

Remember to verify these perks before signing up. Memberships to various gyms come at different prices. One membership might be more expensive but offer additional perks or amenities.

Know what you're getting for your money — and what is

important to you.

## LOCAL GYM VS. CHAIN GYM

Like everything else in this world, there are advantages and disadvantages to each. Local gyms will always have that personalized touch and generally have more reason-

able prices. You might like the convenience of a chain gym's multiple locations. Remember that locally owned businesses return more money into their local communities. This is always something to keep in mind when shopping for the right fit.

Before choosing a gym, con-

sider your lifestyle. Is supporting local businesses important to you? Do you travel often, making availability crucial?

The whole point of a gym membership is to use it, so don't stack the odds against yourself from the beginning. The right gym for you is about fit — not fashion.



# Learn a New Sport

**L**earning a new sport is a healthy way to meet new people and pick up a new hobby — all while bolstering your physical activity and your mental stamina.

Trying out something new benefits us all on all levels — conditioning our bodies and challenging our minds.

Performing the same tasks over time can get redundant. Switch it up and add a new activity to your routine.

## TEAM SPORTS

Team sports are the perfect choice for those actively looking to meet new people and form new relationships. They also are the perfect opportunity to refine communication and collaboration skills, which tend to diminish as we age.

Bowling, golf and tennis are all great choices, and are sports that commonly have leagues and tournaments specifically for seniors.

## SOLO SPORTS

Perhaps you are looking for something you can do on your own. Solo sports offer more flexibility because they release you from keeping to a specific practice or meet schedule, and you don't need to rely on others in order to learn or play.



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Both swimming and golf are ideal solo sport options for seniors because they are low impact on joints but still offer arduous physical activity.

## HIRE A PROFESSIONAL

Hiring a professional local

trainer for a few hours each week is a great way to hone your skills.

Investing in a coach is ideal for those who already participate in a sport but want to advance their “game.” A coach is devoted to your improve-

ment and will point out your bad habits without bias.

## FACING THE CHALLENGE

It is important to remember that you are tackling a new project and may feel overwhelmed at times. Don't let

feelings of “not being good enough” or “too old” sneak into your head and set up camp.

Research shows we do what we set our minds to — quite literally. If you feel like you might fail, you will subconsciously hold yourself back.