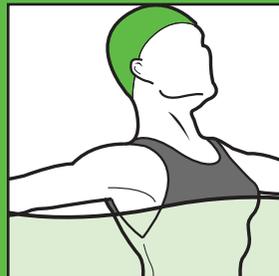
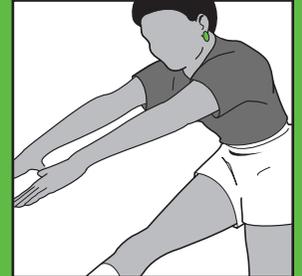
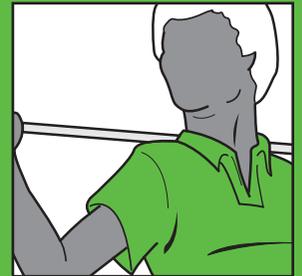
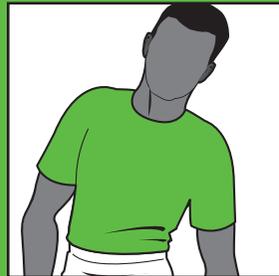

FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

EXERCISE TIPS FOR SENIORS



American Physical Therapy Association

For The Young At Heart

Exercise Tips For Seniors

People are living longer than ever before. Advances in medicine, nutritional awareness, and improved exercise habits have contributed to the rapid growth of the 65+ age group. By the year 2030, there will be more people over age 65 than under age 18!*

In order to make their later years more healthy and productive, many older Americans are adopting a lifestyle promoting total well-being, including eating a healthful diet, engaging in regular exercise, reducing stress, and improving mental health.

Fitness For “The Young At Heart”

Exercise is no less important for those in their sixties and seventies than it is for people half that age. No matter what your age, the benefits of exercise are the same — increased energy and self-esteem, conditioned heart and lungs, improved muscle tone, and greater function of bones and joints. The effects of certain chronic diseases, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, and osteoporosis, can also be reduced by engaging in regular exercise.

*Aging America: Trends and Projections, AARP, 1991

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This brochure is not intended as a substitute for professional health care.

There are many sports and activities you can choose from in order to achieve your fitness goals. The best choices, however, will be those activities that you truly enjoy. It's much easier to stay with something that's fun to do. Even walking for 30 minutes, 4-5 days a week, will go a long way in keeping you fit!

✓ **REMEMBER:** If you experience shortness of breath, dizziness, cold or clammy skin, nausea, or chest pains while exercising, stop exercising immediately and contact your physician.

Cultivate Your Health With Gardening

Having a green thumb can be very rewarding when you see the beautiful results of all your hard work. But before you plant that first seed, try some general stretching exercises to prepare yourself for the lifts, bends, pulls, and lunges to come.



Upper body twist

Getting In Shape

■ **Upper body twist:** Stand with your hands on your hips. Slowly turn your upper body as far as possible to the left for a count of 5. Turn to the right and hold for a count of 5. Repeat 10 times.

■ **Upper body stretch:** Stand with your back straight and arms to your sides. Stretch arms straight out in front of you and hold for a count of 5. Return arms to sides. Repeat 10 times. Now, stretch arms straight in back of you until shoulder blades touch. Hold for a count of 5. Return arms to sides. Repeat 10 times.

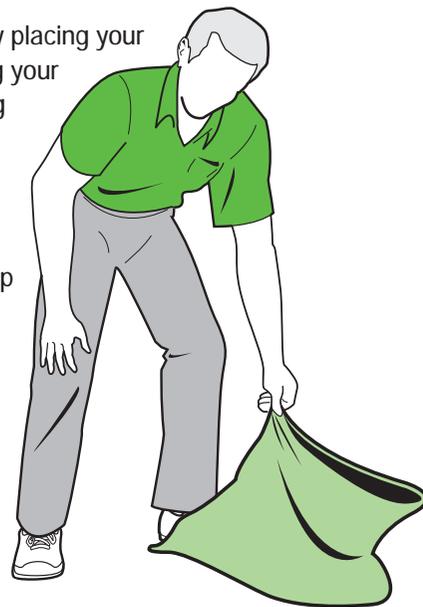
Down To Earth Gardening Tips

■ If you must kneel, stand up and stretch frequently to avoid stiffness. Use knee pads or a pillow to absorb the pressure on your knees. Also, lean on your hands so that your arms absorb some of the shock.

■ Make sure the object — like a sack of mulch — is not too heavy to lift. Test its weight by lifting one corner. Roll or push, rather than carry, heavy loads.

■ Pull an object by placing your feet apart, bending your knees, and leaning away from the object. Pull by straightening your legs. Always face the object and keep your back straight.

Pull—don't lift



✓ Gardening equipment should suit your size, build, and physical capabilities. If you have arthritis in your hands, use garden tools with enlarged handles. Long handles on garden tools ease the strain on an arthritic back.

Fit To A Tee

You can't beat a good game of golf for low-impact exercise and plenty of fresh air. Golf is an excellent sport for keeping physically fit and mentally alert.

Getting in Shape

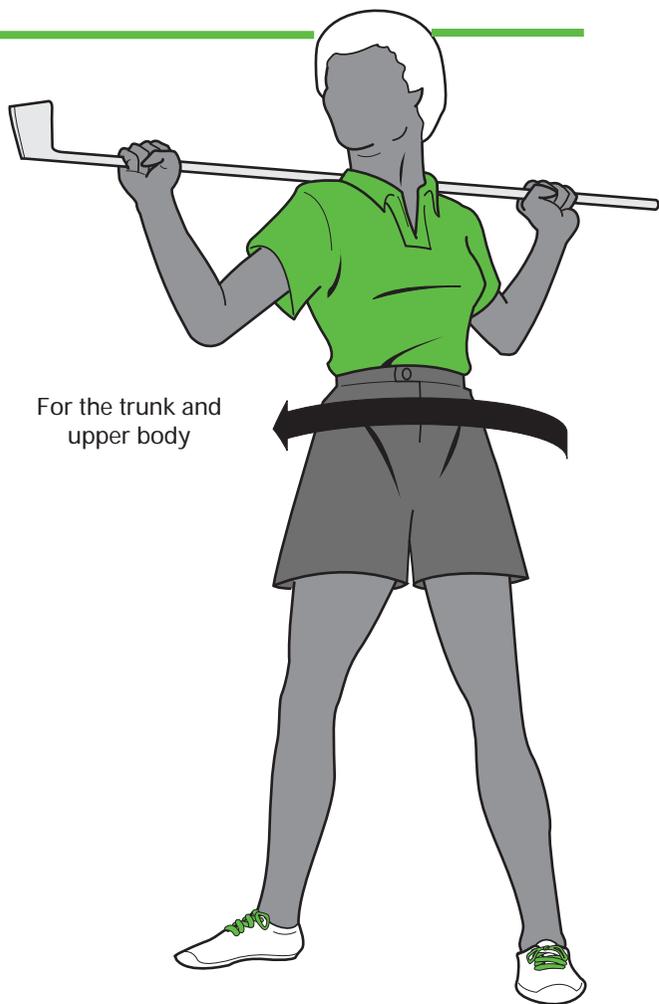
Start exercising a few weeks in advance, about the same time of day you'll be playing golf. Walk 20 to 30 minutes a day, 3-4 times a week. Take a club and begin practicing your grip. Practice your back swing, keeping the club at waist level, and slowly increase to a full swing. Start with one of the shorter clubs, working up to longer, heavier irons.

When You Get To The Course

When you arrive at the golf course, and before you change into your golf shoes, find a bench and try these exercises for warming up your neck, shoulders, trunk, and legs:

- Calf and hamstring warm up: Put your left foot on the bench, keeping your knee close to your body.

Calf and hamstring warm up



For the trunk and upper body

Your right foot remains on the ground. Place your hands under your left knee, holding onto the thigh. Tuck your chin to your chest and curl down slowly. Hold and count to 10. Do not bounce. Come back up slowly, keeping your chin to your chest.

- For the trunk and upper body: Stand and hold your golf club horizontally with both hands. Raise the club and place it behind your neck. Then, with feet comfortably apart, slowly rotate body to the left, then to the center, then to the right. Do this exercise frequently during your game and again afterwards.

Take Steps To Be Fit—Walk!

Walking is a great way to achieve overall fitness year-round. It strengthens your cardiovascular system, tones and limbers up your muscles, and burns off unwanted calories. Walking at a brisk pace gives you the same aerobic benefits as jogging!

Walking also reduces blood pressure, improves sleeping habits, helps digestion, alleviates constipation, raises metabolism, and helps to reduce loss of bone mass in post-menopausal women.

Getting In Shape

During the first week, walk 10-15 minutes at a slow pace. Stay on a flat surface — avoid hills and stairs. After a week, maintain the same distance but pick up your pace. Over the next several weeks, build up gradually to a 20- to 30-minute walk, 3-4 times weekly, at a pace that is brisk but comfortable. You should be able to walk and talk at the same time.

Stretch Before And After You Walk

■ **Hamstring stretch:** Place the heel of your right foot up on a bench. Straighten out your right leg, and keep your left knee (the leg you're standing on) slightly bent. Reach for the toes of your right foot with both hands. Hold stretch for 15-20 seconds, then repeat with other leg. Do



this several times, gently at first. Stretch slowly and steadily — don't bounce!

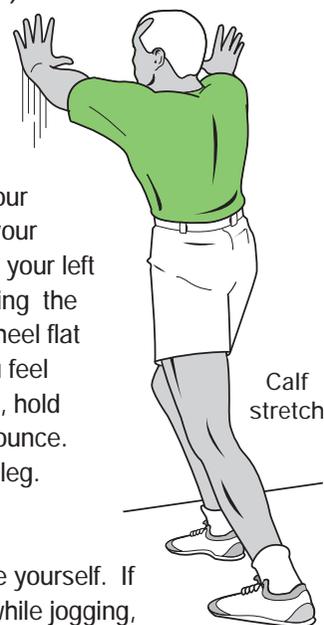
Joining The Joggers?

If you're thinking about joining the more than 10 million Americans now jogging, be sure your jogging equipment — your cardiopulmonary respiratory system, feet, and legs—is in good working order!

Stretch Before And After You Jog

■ Calf and hamstring warm up (see "When You Get To The Course," page 4).

■ **Calf stretch:** Stand facing a wall, arm's length away, and place both of your hands against the wall at chest height. Keeping your right foot on the floor, and your right leg slightly bent, move your left foot back behind you, keeping the knee straightened and the heel flat against the floor. When you feel your left calf muscle stretch, hold for a count of 10. Do not bounce. Repeat exercise with other leg.



Jogging Tips

■ Use the "talk test" to pace yourself. If you can't talk comfortably while jogging, you're pushing too hard. Alternate between jogging and walking at first.

■ Avoid hard surfaces whenever possible. Dirt paths are better than asphalt, and asphalt is better than concrete. Grassy areas may look inviting but they may hide holes, rocks, and other potential hazards.

Your Passport To Good Health

Have you been bitten by the travel bug? Wherever you roam, you'll probably walk more, bend more, and twist and turn more. That's why it's important when you plan your travel itinerary to include exercises that will keep you limber while you're on the go.



Travel Tips

Several weeks before your trip, take a 20- to 30-minute walk, 3-4 times a week, wearing the shoes you will wear on your trip.

Before you climb into a car or board a plane or train, do some stretching exercises to relax the muscles in your neck, shoulders, back, trunk, arms, and legs.

- Turn your head slowly as far to the left as is comfortable. Then turn your head to the right. Repeat 3 times.
- Shrug your shoulders. Make circles with one shoulder, then the other. Touch your shoulder blades together and relax. Repeat 3-4 times.
- When sitting, keep your knees as high as your hips. Place a pillow behind your lower back for support. Also, pump each foot several times, as if working a car accelerator, to bring back circulation to feet and ankles.
- When traveling by car, wear your seatbelt and keep

the headrest lowered to a position that is in the center of the back of your head. In a plane or train, recline the seat to change your position.

- Exercise, stretch, or walk every hour in the plane, train, or bus aisle. When driving, pull over every hour and get out, stretch, and walk around the car.

Water Workouts

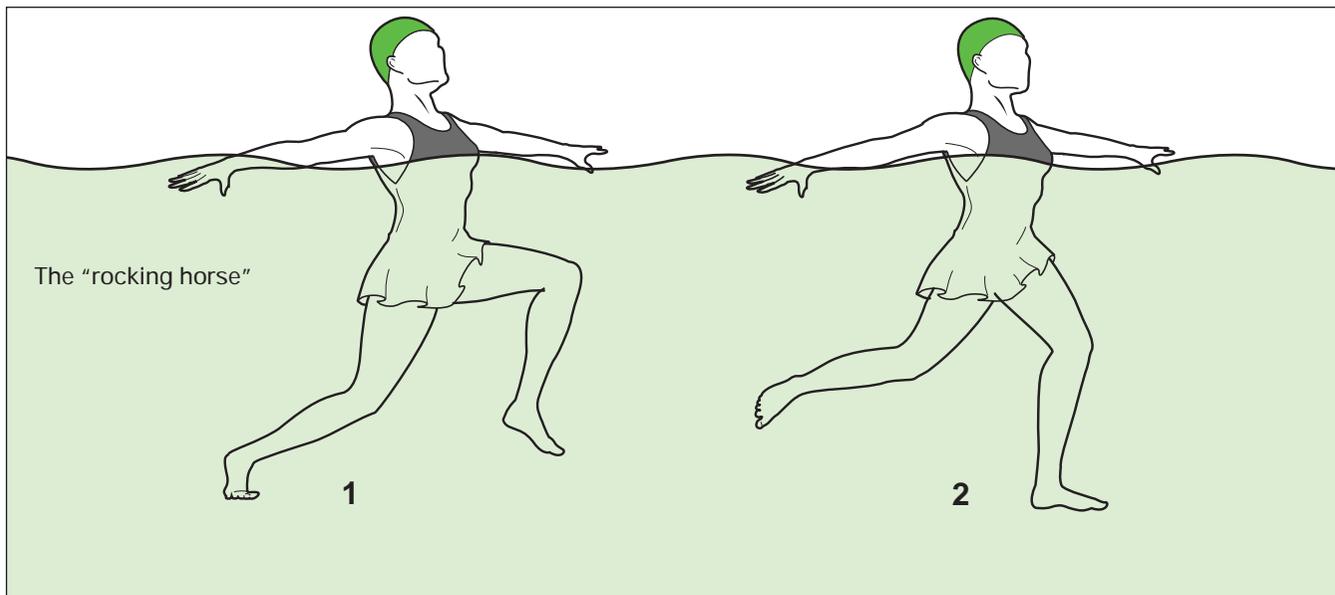
Exercising in the water is one of the best ways to improve fitness and overall well-being. In most cases, you don't even have to know how to swim. Because of the body's buoyancy in water, a water exercise program greatly decreases the strain on the joints and other supporting structures of the body.

Getting Your Feet Wet

Before you begin a water exercise program, determine if you have any medical problems that may prevent you from participating (or warrant seeing a doctor first). These may include uncontrolled blood pressure, open or not completely healed wounds, uncontrolled seizures, severe osteoporosis, incontinent bowel or bladder, or severely limited breathing capacity.

Safety Tips

- Before entering the pool, make sure you have identified the depth markings.
- If you are alone in a pool, make sure someone is nearby in case of an emergency.
- Wait 45 minutes to an hour after eating before exercising.
- If the water is cool, you may want to walk several laps as a warm up before exercising.
- If you have diabetes, stub your toes easily, or have difficulty with your feet slipping, you may want to wear an old pair of sneakers or special water shoes while in the water.



Getting In Shape

■ Strengthen legs and buttocks ("rocking horse"): In at least waist-high water, position yourself so that your left foot is about one foot ahead of your right. Lift arms away from your sides to comfortably maintain balance. Raise your left leg, with left knee bent. Push off with your right leg, and land on your left foot. When landing, keep your heel down, and knee slightly bent. Then rock back on the right foot (heel up) while lifting the front knee up. Do several times on one side, then switch legs. The arms can be simultaneously pushing and pulling.

✓ REMEMBER: Stretching exercises should be done both before an activity as a "warm up" and again afterwards as a "cool down." The "cool down" lets your heart rate return to normal and helps your muscles and joints remain flexible.

Choosing Your Physical Therapist

Physical therapists help people prevent injuries, stay physically fit, and overcome disabilities from chronic disease and traumatic injuries.

To find a licensed physical therapist, call your local hospital, consult the Yellow Pages of your telephone book, or ask relatives or friends who may have sought the services of a physical therapist in the past. To help select a physical therapist, you may consider asking the following questions:

- Are you a licensed physical therapist in my state?
- How much experience do you have treating patients with my condition?
- Do you have specialized equipment, if needed, to treat my condition?
- Will you accept Medicare and what are your payment policies?

- How will my treatment program be determined?
- How long will my treatment sessions last?
- How long might I possibly need treatment?



About APTA

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) is a national professional organization representing more than 70,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students throughout the United States.

APTA serves its members and the public by increasing the understanding of the physical therapist's role in the health care system and by fostering improvements in physical therapy education, research, and practice.

Other APTA Brochures

- Fitness: A Way Of Life
- Fit Kids
- Fit Teens
- Taking Care Of Your Back
- Taking Care Of Your Foot and Ankle
- Taking Care Of Your Hand, Wrist, and Elbow
- Taking Care Of Your Hip
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Acknowledgements

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