




# Improve Fitness Over 50

The Key to Aging on Your Terms

**Confident Living**  
A LIFE ENRICHING  
COMMUNITIES PROGRAM  

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*The Choice in Wellness Lifestyle<sup>SM</sup>*

**E**very year we discover more about the health benefits of staying physically active as we age. With the growing number of people over 50, scientists have been increasingly focusing on research efforts to uncover the secrets to healthy aging. And not surprisingly, movement is the best medicine for staying fit and independent. If you are looking to either increase your mobility or keep the independence you have, you've come to the right place.



By reading this eBook, you are taking the first steps on your journey toward holistic wellness which will allow you to age on your terms.

## What is Fitness?

Physical fitness is the ability to perform physical tasks easily. It is a multidimensional ability to do physical things with little effort or pain. It is often measured by six major components:

- Cardiovascular Endurance
- Muscular Strength
- Muscular Endurance
- Flexibility
- Body Composition
- Motor Control



## Types of Exercise

- **Endurance** Otherwise known as aerobic exercise, endurance activities increase your heart rate and cause you to breathe heavily. Building endurance makes it easier to perform activities of varying intensity.
- **Strength** Strength exercises create more muscle mass. To build strength you must lift weights or use resistance when you exercise.
- **Balance** Balance exercises help you stay upright, a common desire in older adults. Building lower-body and core strength will help improve balance.
- **Flexibility** Staying flexible keeps your body limber so you can avoid injuries while exercising. Stretching your muscles is key to flexibility.

## Types of Activity

- **Low-Intensity** Movement without sweating (unless it is a hot day) with no significant changes in your breathing. Typing and slowly walking could be examples of low-intensity activity.
- **Moderate-Intensity** This should raise your heart rate and make you breathe harder and faster. You should begin to feel warm enough to sweat after roughly 10 minutes. This could include biking, home exercises, and calisthenics.
- **High-Intensity** Vigorous movement that causes you to breathe hard and sweat with a significantly raised heart rate. You should be sweating after about five minutes of high-intensity activity. This could include running, jumping rope, vigorous calisthenics.

## Calculate Your BMI

Your Body Mass Index (BMI) is a calculation to roughly determine your body fat percentage. Essentially, it is a measurement of an individual's leanness based on their height and weight. It is intended to quantify tissue mass and is widely used as an indicator of a person's healthy weight.

**Example:** Say you are a man weighing 180 pounds and you are 70 inches tall. You would divide 180 by 4,900 which equals .036. Multiply that number by 703 which equals your BMI of 25.82.

## Reasons to Stay Fit as You Age

Getting older is unavoidable, but it doesn't mean you have to become less active or that you can't improve your current fitness levels. As you age, your body may start slowing down and you might find that the same tasks you used to find easy may become more difficult. On top of that, your metabolism begins to slow down over time making it harder to perform regular tasks. But it doesn't have to be that way.



## Improved Muscle Strength & Endurance

Recently, there has been attention drawn to the idea of “movement as medicine.” The idea suggests that movement -- or staying active -- can affect everything from injury prevention to a healthier immune system. In fact, new research is challenging the idea that health declines as a by-product of aging. It is inactivity that appears to be the real danger.

For example, one study by Ball University observed three groups of people. The groups were divided into active 65 plus individuals, inactive 65 plus individuals, and a group of 20-something individuals. They found that the active group of senior individuals had muscles as capable as those of people in their 20's. Their muscles also showed physical similarities. Equally healthy capillaries and enzymes are indicators of healthy muscle build. However, the inactive group showed a 40% reduction in muscle capabilities.

Simply put, science backs up the old expression: use it or lose it. So, the idea of movement as medicine indicates that the more active you are, the fewer health problems you will have.

## Improved Heart Health

It should come as no surprise that regular exercise is good for your heart. The heart is a muscle like any other that needs exercise to keep in shape. When properly exercised, your heart can pump more blood through your body which carries more oxygen for optimal efficiency which will help you stay healthy longer. Additionally, regular exercise can keep your blood vessels and arteries flexible which helps ensure good blood flow.

## Improved Mood

Another benefit of improved fitness extends to mood. Exercise releases endorphins, especially in group activities like yoga, spin class, and synchronized swimming where groups of people are moving together. Because of the release of endorphins and the team mentality of these activities, many people experience feeling a bond or closeness with those in their fitness groups. This reinforces our positive feelings toward exercise.

## Reasons to Stay Fit as You Age *continued...*

### Meditation

You don't have to lift heavy weights or raise your heart rate to harness mindfulness. Meditation can be a great way to practice important breathing exercises and posture. Meditation can help reduce stress and blood pressure while improving feelings of happiness.



### Improved Brain Power

The better your cardiovascular fitness, the better blood flow to your brain. Vascular problems are numerous and vary by levels of severity. But when it comes to your brainpower, atherosclerosis is what is important. This is a condition when fatty plaque builds up in the arteries. Another condition to keep track of is arteriosclerosis, the process of arteries stiffening as you age. Both conditions are contributors to cardiovascular disease, but these same issues can also damage your healthy brain function.

There is a connection between healthy heart function and lack of plaque buildup to healthy brain function. As protein deposits, known as beta-amyloids, accumulate in the brain, the symptoms of Alzheimer's will arise. This protein buildup is called hypoperfusion and means the brain isn't getting sufficient blood flow over a long period of time. Due to this similarity, there is diagnostically no difference between Alzheimer's and vascular dementia.

### Improved Self-Confidence

Fitness and regular exercise often improve your positive self-image. Studies show that regardless of weight, gender, age, or size, regular exercise quickly elevates a person's perception of their attractiveness which in turn elevates confidence. Research has found that there is a strong relationship between physical activity and self-esteem.

### Improved Social Relationships

With improved mood and self-confidence comes improved social relationships. Whether it's the courage to make new friends or more physical and mental energy to converse with the people you already know, exercise can change your social life. It doesn't hurt if you have a workout buddy to jump-start building new social bonds.

## Improve Fitness Over 50

To improve your fitness over 50, try incorporating these weekly activities into your routine.

### Endurance Exercises Over 50

Endurance exercises are activities like running, cycling, and swimming. They are the best ways to improve cardiovascular function and to prevent your metabolism from slowing down. For best results, get at least 30-60 minutes of moderate-intensity cardio at least three days a week.



## Breathing

Working out can be a challenge, but as you stretch and exercise it is easy to forget to pay attention to your breathing. Learning how to control your breathing during your exercise routine can drastically improve your results. Here are a few ways breathing can change your workout:

- *Can help you not bounce during stretching*
- *Improves your flow of oxygen*
- *Controlling breathe during weight training can help you lift more weight*
- *A consistent breathing pattern can help you run or bike longer*

***If this sounds easy, that's because it is! But there are different ways to breathe which can be changed to fit your activity. Here is how to breathe for your desired activity:***

### • **Running**

Many runners find breathing most comfortable when you take one breath for every two foot strikes. This means taking two steps while breathing in and two steps while breathing out. This is also known as the 2:2 rhythm. Due to gravity's effect on the diaphragm and surrounding organs, it is best to synchronize your breath to the up and down rhythm or your steps. This puts less stress on your diaphragm which can burden your breathing.

### • **Strength Training**

Anyone who hits the weights knows that exhaling on the exertion is the best way to breathe while lifting weights. This is because contracting your respiratory muscles will help you brace the load during heavier lifts. To take advantage of breathing while weight lifting, exhale slowly and continuously while pressing the bar, then inhale at the top of the lift. Be sure not to hold your breath.

## Improve Fitness Over 50 *continued...*

### Aquatic Exercise

Aquatic exercise options might be right for you if you have any mobility challenges. The buoyancy may help you move while the water provides low impact resistance. If you have access to a pool, you have access to balance, stamina, and strength training. This can be helpful for physical therapy after an injury or surgery.



### • Yoga

Looking to unwind? Practicing yoga can be a great way to relieve stress and stay fit. It should come as no surprise that breathing is important in yoga, as it is a major factor in the relaxing aspects of the activity. For yoga, you should match an equal length inhale to an equal length exhale. This style of breathing is said to have a calming effect and reduce stress.

### • Interval Training

If steady running or cycling isn't for you, try interval training. This training trades in the steady pace of running or cycling for high-intensity exercise that makes you breathe heavily, with low-intensity activity. To give this exercise a try, include five intervals of intensity with three high and two low. To switch between high and low on a treadmill, simply increase the speed and incline. To switch between intensities on a bike, increase speed and resistance. Complete an intensity level by maintaining it for three to five minutes each (depending on your fitness). To determine if you are working at a high enough intensity try singing. If you can't sing but can still talk, you are likely high enough. Try interval training two to three times a week.

### • Strength Training

Strength training is a great way to retain muscle mass as you age and since both men and women can lose mass as they age it is important for individuals of both genders. As your metabolism slows down, your body will begin to replace muscle with fat, and strength training can help prevent that from happening. Additionally, skeletal muscle helps protect joints and can assist in bone strength and density. Not to mention, improved balance and agility.

**So, how can you take advantage of improving your muscle strength? That's easy, lift weights!**

To start, do one set of 10-15 repetitions of any exercise involving weights. Start with two-pound weights and slowly increase over time.

# Exercises for Balance

## Tandem/Staggered Stance

**Equipment:** Chair

**Starting Position:** Stand behind a chair, close enough that you can reach the chair and hold on with both hands if necessary.

1. Place right foot in front of the left foot, directly in front of the other, with the right heel touching the toes of the left foot. Think of placing them as if you were trying to walk on a balance beam. It is perfectly fine to have them slightly separated/staggered if you cannot bring them that close together.
2. Work to balance this stance and hold for 30-45 seconds, keeping head up, tummy tight, and shoulders back.
3. Repeat with the left foot, 30-45 seconds in this stance.

*EXPERT TIP • To make this exercise harder, you can progress to only holding on with one hand or “hovering” both hands over the chair. You can also close your eyes to add more of a challenge.*



## Standing on One Foot

**Equipment:** Chair

**Starting Position:** Stand off to the side of the chair, allowing you to still hold on with one hand.

1. While standing on one side of the chair, you will lift the foot farthest from the chair off the ground in a position that is comfortable for you.
2. Hold the position for 30-45 seconds keeping head up, tummy tight, and shoulders back.
3. Eventually, it would be beneficial to work the knee up to 90 degrees. Repeat with the opposite leg.
4. Repeat on other foot.

*EXPERT TIP • You can close your eyes to add more of a challenge to this exercise. Ensure you're comfortable with the exercise itself before making it more difficult.*





# Low Impact Exercise

## Back Stretch

**Back stretching is a great low-intensity activity. Maintaining mobility of the back is essential for good posture and reducing back pain.**

- 1.** Sit as tall as you can with both feet planted on the ground, in a chair with arms.
- 2.** While holding onto the left chair arm, twist your torso to the left and look over your left shoulder.
- 3.** Hold for several breaths.
- 4.** Repeat with the right side, holding for several breaths during the stretch.



## Forearm Stretch

**It is very important to stretch the muscles that have been stressed after activity to help maintain longevity in performing those tasks.**

- 1.** Extend one arm out in front of the body, palms face away, with the wrist at shoulders height and the fingers pointing up.
- 2.** With the opposite hand gently pull back the fingers and flex the wrist. Hold for 20-30 seconds.
- 3.** Extend wrist forward until finger are pointed towards the floor.
- 4.** With the opposite hand gently pull back the fingers and flex the wrist. Hold for 20-30 seconds.
- 5.** Switch arms.

Recommendation: 2 sets each arm for 20-30 secs on each hold 3-4 times weekly



# No Weights Needed

## Leg Circles

**Starting Position:** Stand behind or to the side of a chair with your feet shoulder-width apart.

1. Begin by raising one leg in front of you to knee height.
2. Once your leg is at knee height, rotate your leg in a clockwise motion.
3. After you have completed 10 circles in a clockwise motion, repeat the exercise in the opposite direction (counter-clockwise)

Repeat the exercise 10-15 times (clockwise & counter-clock-

*EXPERT TIP • Make sure to keep a slight bend in both of your legs for the whole exercise. You do not want to lock your knees during any exercise.*



## Rotational Punches

**Starting Position:** Stand up, or sit in a chair, with your feet shoulder-width apart and bring your hands up to the side of your chest.

1. Exhale as you punch your right arm across your body.
2. Inhale as you pull your right arm back into the starting position.
3. Repeat the process for your left arm
4. Alternate arms and continue

Repeat the exercise 10-15 times with each arm.

*EXPERT TIP • When done standing up, pivot the same foot as the arm you are punching to engage your leg muscles more. This exercise will work your core, balance, and coordination more when done standing up.*



# Light Weight Exercises

## Shoulder External Rotation

**Starting Position:** Stand with feet shoulder length apart and face forward.

1. Using a resistance band or light weight with the working arm at a 90 degree angle, pull the resistance away from the center of the body with good control.  
(2-3 seconds per rep)
2. Maintain 90 degree alignment of the arm from shoulders to elbows and elbows to wrist throughout the full range of motion of the exercise.
3. Keep your elbow close to the torso as you go through each rep.

Recommendation: 3 sets on each arm of 15-20 reps 2-3 times weekly.

*EXPERT TIP • Keep your elbow attached to your side and work slowly through the range of motion on this one. You want to make sure you have complete control of the resistance during this movement. If this exercise is new to you, start without equipment.*



## Reverse Bicep Curls

**Muscles worked:** Biceps & Forearms

1. Use a resistance band or light dumbbell, with the arm out and palms facing the ground. Your arms should be fully extended while your feet are shoulder width apart from each other.
2. While holding the upper arms stationary, curl the weights while squeezing the biceps. Only the forearms should move.
3. Continue the movement until your hand is at shoulder level. Hold that position for a second as you squeeze the muscle.
4. Slowly return the resistance to the starting position by only moving the forearms.

Recommendation: 3 sets of 12-15 reps 2-3 times weekly.

*EXPERT TIP • Try to keep the elbows close to the torso. The closer the grip the better the contraction will be. To avoid strain on the shoulders, you may also curl up to a 90 degree angle with the hand stopping at your hip.*



# Confident Living

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COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

*The Choice in Wellness Lifestyle<sup>SM</sup>*

**Confident Living** is a continuing care at home program offered by Life Enriching Communities (LEC) designed to help people navigate their options so they can live independently in their own homes.

Call for more information: 513-719-3522 or visit [www.confident-living.org](http://www.confident-living.org)

**Life Enriching Communities** also owns and operates three senior living communities (CCRCs)...

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- Twin Towers, College Hill: 513-853-2000
- Twin Lakes, Montgomery: 513-247-1300

## CLEVELAND AREA

- Concord Reserve, Westlake: 440-871-0090

For additional resources you can visit us online at: [www.lec.org](http://www.lec.org)



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