

Senior Health Fitness and Movement: by Lindsey Gillette

As a senior, one of the most important things you can do for your health is to keep moving. No, I don't mean out of your house, I mean moving your body. Exercising on a daily basis, even on a small and moderate scale can improve the quality of your life in many ways. Even if you have never had an exercise routine, there are appropriate activities for you.

Before you begin, consult your health care provider about any obstacles. If you are living with serious or chronic conditions, you may still be able to exercise and your efforts may actually improve your conditions over time. For example, if you are living with high blood pressure, adding moderate aerobic activities to your life like walking, swimming, or even vigorous yard work can make your heart stronger, pumping blood with less effort, decreasing the effort on your arteries and lowering blood pressure overall.

After identifying any exercises that may not be appropriate for you, begin to list what kinds of exercises are of interest to you. Generally there are four types of exercise: endurance, strength, flexibility, and balance. Endurance includes aerobic exercises that get your heart pumping and your breath flowing. Activities like jogging, tennis, basketball, and dancing improve the health of your heart, lungs and circulatory system. The strength category includes basic weightlifting or resistance training. Muscle building contributes to bone health by increasing or maintaining bone mass and preventing osteoporosis.

Third, gaining flexibility in the body can help make your everyday activities easier and less painful. Even routine movements like checking your blind spot while driving can become difficult without proper range of motion. Finally, improving balance can help you prevent falls-a leading cause in the downfall of senior health. It is important to incorporate each of these four types of exercise into every week.

It is recommended by the National Institute on Aging to get 150 minutes of moderate-intensity, endurance activities a week. Strength training that works your major muscle groups is recommended two or more days a week, but be sure not to work the same muscle groups on consecutive days. Your muscles need time to recover between strengthening sessions. If it is not possible for you to begin with these recommendations, do as much as you can and work your way up to your goals. Also, you can split your workouts into shorter sessions. Three, ten-minute sessions are just as effective as one thirty minute session. Allow yourself to begin exactly where you are, not where you think you "should be."

Start with activities that you enjoy. If you like being outside, consider walking with your dog or going on hikes. There are many guided hikes and trails to explore in our area. Gardening and landscaping can count toward your exercise quota, especially if you are lifting bags of soil or shoveling earth.

Depending on your workout personality, you may be seeking a solo yoga video in your living room or a step aerobics class in a gym. There are benefits and weaknesses to both. Working out on your own can be comfortable. You can roll out of bed with your pajamas and bedhead and blare music as loud or as soft as you like. No one is there to see you miss that dance step and your workout can be as creative as you can imagine (obstacle course in the garage?). However, working out alone can pose safety risks. If your instructor is on the television, he/she can't tell you that your form is dangerous or that the exercise isn't appropriate for you. Working out in a group or with a trainer comes with built in motivation. You may get to know others in your class and form new friendships. Your instructor will be able to help you modify exercises or suggest other activities that you may enjoy. However, working out in a group can be intimidating, expensive, and you are often on a strict agenda or time schedule.

If you decide to try a group setting you should look for classes that are appropriate for your level. There will often be a description about the class. Look for the words, "all levels" or "great for seniors and beginners." Get recommendations from your friends and have them accompany you to your first session. Expect to tell the teacher about any health conditions or injuries you have like high or low blood pressure, bulging discs, dizziness, or other concerns, such as you would prefer not to partner up with

a stranger or receive any hands on adjustments. Remember in any setting: you are responsible to honor your own limits. If you need a break, take a break, even if that is not what the rest of the class is doing.

There are many resources online or in the library for beginning senior exercise programs. If you are very limited in motion for health reasons such as bad knees or being overweight, you might consider a "chair fitness" program. Participants sit in a chair while doing simple energizing, muscle building, or flexibility exercises. "Sit and Be Fit" is a popular and highly recommended chair fitness program that has aired on PBS since 1987. They have books and DVDs available as well as resources on the Internet.

Besides gaining stronger muscles and flexibility from your exercise regime, there are many other benefits that are important to your overall health. With moderate exercise, you stimulate production of helpful antibodies in your immune system to prevent sickness. You may also notice your mood and concentration improve over time. Finally, a very important topic for seniors: independence. Your ability to stay physically active and free from falls is essential for living independently.

Whatever fitness activities you find, stick with it. If you have to take a break, just get back to it when you can. You will soon feel the benefits and exercising will begin to feel like second nature to you.



(Photo by Judy Hoyle, Illinois Valley News)

Susanne "Kindi" Fahrnkopf is flanked by two guests at her book signing event on February 13. Her new book: **Takilma Tales: The Hippy History of Takilma, Oregon**, developed from a series of articles she wrote for the IV News. Contact the author at info@takilmatales.com. L to R: Pat Mersman, Fahrnkopf and Alberta Heaghney.

IVHS Needs Aspire Mentors

ASPIRE (Access to Student Assistance Programs in Reach of Everyone) is a mentoring program that helps students pursue education and training beyond high school. Students meet with an adult mentor who is trained to guide them through career exploration, college admissions, scholarship applications, and other topics related to higher education. Mentoring sessions occur weekly in the high school library, and last for one class period.

I had an ASPIRE mentor when I was a student at IVHS five years ago. My family couldn't afford to pay for college tuition, but my mentor helped me find scholarships that covered the cost. Largely thanks to ASPIRE, I graduated last summer with a B.A. and no student loan debt! I believe

there are more students in this community who would, like me, benefit from this program.

I recently volunteered as an ASPIRE mentor for two years, and found it very rewarding. Students are eager to talk about their goals and interests and are open to hearing advice. No prior experience is required to become a mentor. There is a free training session to prepare you for working with students. You need only to pass a background check and provide three character references. Time commitment can be from 1-4 hours per week, on Mon., Tues., or Wed., between 9:15 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Get an application at the IVHS office or contact me, Sara Austin, ASPIRE Coordinator: 541-218-5998, ivhs.aspire@gmail.com

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