

# Healthy Aging—You're never too old (or too young) to get physical

By Diane Lindsey

You are never too old -- or too young -- to reap the benefits of physical fitness!

Regular physical activity has a multitude of benefits, both physical and psychological. The human body repairs itself and performs more efficiently with regular exercise and good nutrition. Many of the changes that are typically associated with aging can be prevented or lessened if by participating in regular exercise. This empowers people to live their lives vigorously and alertly, and with plenty of energy to pursue our

interests.

To develop and maintain fitness, The Healthy Aging Project of the Washington County Department of Aging and Veterans' Services emphasizes the critical mix -- endurance, strength, flexibility, and balance. These building blocks of fitness are key to staying healthy and independent.

Endurance comes from aerobic activities, which increase breathing and heart rates for an extended period of time. Such activities improve the health of heart, lungs, and circulatory systems. The goal is to work

your way up to a moderate-to-vigorous level of exercise that increases your breathing and heart rate. You can divide your exercise into sessions of no less than 10 minutes at a time, as long as they add up to a minimum of 30 minutes at the end of the day. (If you do less than 10 minutes at a time, you won't get the desired cardiovascular and respiratory benefits.) Strive to build up to a minimum of 30 minutes of endurance exercise on most or all days of the week.

Endurance activities include walking, swimming, dancing,

and cycling. Even gardening and housework, if done continuously for about an hour, will increase your heart rate and burn 160 to 300 calories, depending on how vigorously the tasks are performed.

Strength training builds stronger muscles, strengthens bones, increases lean muscle mass, and supports joints. The stronger your body is, the less chance you have of injury through accidents. In addition, you will build a greater resistance to illnesses.

Even very small changes in muscle size can make a big difference in strength, especially in people who've already lost a lot of muscle. Strength exercises also increase metabolism and that makes us more energetic. And it's critical in helping to prevent osteoporosis.

Most strength exercises involve lifting or pushing weights, and gradually increasing the amount of weight you use. You can also use a resistance band, which is like a giant rubber band; stretching it helps build muscles. It's important to begin strength training using weights that you can lift for 8 - 12 repetitions, followed by a rest of about 60 seconds, then a second set of repetitions. Gradually you will want to increase the weight to continue challenging your muscles. Always allow at least one day between strength training sessions to allow adequate time for your muscles to recover.

Flexibility comes from

stretching exercises that help us to move more freely and maintain the ideal range in which muscles can bend and stretch around a joint. The greater range of motion that you have, the easier it will be to perform simple every day tasks such as climbing the stairs. Some suggestions for increasing flexibility are yoga, tai chi, and basic stretching moves.

Balance helps prevent falls, a major cause of injuries that can lead to loss of independence. Exercises that strengthen leg muscles and the lower body help improve balance. Doing your regular strength exercises will improve your balance at the same time. Try tai chi, yoga, dancing, and walking.

Getting fit can be as simple as being active 30 minutes or more on most days. It doesn't even have to be 30 minutes in a row, just a total of 30 minutes for the day. Make fitness an important part of your day. Exercise with a friend, spouse, or neighbor. You don't have to exercise hard to get the benefits, but you do need regular exercise and activity to keep your body and mind sharp.

So get up, get moving, and stick with it. Being physically fit is one of the choices each of us can make to enhance our "Healthy Aging"!

*Diane Lindsey is the coordinator of the Healthy Aging Program of the Washington County Department of Aging and Veterans' Services.*

**The businesses and organizations  
that advertise in the Independent make  
this community newspaper possible.**

**Without them, births and deaths,  
meetings and events, celebrations and  
problems would continue...  
but the lack of communication  
would diminish our community.**

**When you go shopping for  
every-day items or for gifts,  
please support these advertisers.**

**There is no better way to let them  
know that their participation  
really is appreciated.**



## VERNONIA INN

Enjoy a quiet weekend with us.

**FULL SIZE, IN ROOM**

**\$55<sup>00</sup> HOT TUBS \$80<sup>00</sup>**  
**REG. ROOM \$45<sup>00</sup>**

Queen Beds • Private Bath • Separate Entrance  
Cable TV • Phones • Handicapped Access

**CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**

FOR RESERVATIONS CALL

**1-800-354-9494 / 503-429-4006**

GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE

**900 MADISON AVE., VERNONIA, OR 97084**

Just one block off scenic Nehalem River Hwy. (Oregon 47)