

Keep on exercising as you age

Aging is a process none of us can prevent.

The body begins to slow down, affecting various aspects of our health. In particular, our muscle strength, endurance, and flexibility begin to suffer making it more difficult to complete daily activities, such as household chores, meal preparation and social events.

However, we can stay healthy by incorporating regular physical activity into our daily routine. Studies continue to show that exercise is important for promoting good health, functional independence, and quality of life in older adults.

In other words, exercise may help slow the aging process, producing long-term health benefits and allowing seniors to stay independent as they age.

Many seniors choose not to do regular physical activity because they're afraid it may be dangerous for them, especially if they are suffering from disease or disabilities. Others choose not to do it because it's too hard, it's boring, or they just don't enjoy moving their bodies.

The majority of seniors may safely participate in moderate physical activity. The exercise does not have to be strenuous to be effective! In fact, many health professionals recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day, even for people

suffering from certain age-related disorders.

Those limited by physical abilities due to medical conditions or frailty may have to go about exercise more carefully than others but certainly should not dismiss it entirely. New

exercisers should consult a physician before starting any physical activity routine and begin in a class setting where there is supervision.

The key is to just get out and move!

What does the Sheridan community offer its seniors for exercise?

The Sheridan Senior Center and the YMCA have many options available to accommodate the diversity among seniors. In fact, the two organizations have recently joined efforts to help keep our seniors in the community healthy.

The Sheridan Senior Center offers a chair-based exercise class three days a week. The class includes activities to maintain strength and flexibility and engages individuals socially.

Participants of all levels of fitness are welcomed and accommodated so the exercise experience is nonthreat-



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Patty
Cox



ening, nonintimidating, and beneficial to all.

The YMCA recently took over leadership of the Senior Center chair exercise class. The classes will continue to provide key elements of strength and flexibility and will always

include an element of FUN, which is one of the Y's program objectives.

The Senior Center also has a free walking group that meets twice a week at the YMCA. A Senior Center volunteer directs the walking group in a YMCA gym. Here the seniors walk in an environment that is safe from the elements of weather, uneven terrain, and traffic.

Other programs at the Senior Center include tai chi and yoga. These are great activities that help with balance, agility, and stress release.

The YMCA senior programs include activities both on land and in water. For those individuals who suffer from arthritis or other joint-related diseases or may be challenged with weight, the water provides buoyancy and support, puts less strain on joints, and makes exercise easier and more comfortable.

The YMCA offers a variety of pool classes in the warmer Scott Pool, from aerobics and strength to an arthritis class that focuses on joint range of motion and movement.

YMCA senior land classes include cardio and strength programs, gentle yoga, and a core training and stretch class. The cardio-strength classes are held in the Activate Sheridan Center and feature a new circuit of user-friendly strength machines that seniors thoroughly enjoy.

The core training and stretch class combines pilates and traditional abdominal exercises to strengthen core muscles, then concludes with a stretching segment to improve flexibility. Both segments are major components that help with balance and activities of everyday living.

So, whatever our reasons for not exercising might be, now is the time for us to put moderate physical activity into our daily routines. We'll reap the long-term health benefits and may even find exercise enjoyable!

We're never too old to start!

Center Stage is written by friends of the Senior Center for the Sheridan community. It is a collection of insights and stories related to living well at every age.

Patty Cox is director of health and well-being at Sheridan County YMCA.