

Especially important for older adults to exercise

“Behavioral Cancer” is a term used by exercise professionals to describe what leading a sedentary lifestyle exhibits.

Being sedentary or lacking the minimal requirement of physical activity required by the surgeon general (30 minutes of continuous or accumulated low- to moderate-intensity physical activity, five to seven days of the week) defines the cause of “Behavioral Cancer.”

It is especially important for the older adult population to engage in this amount of physical activity in order to exhibit healthy aging. Healthy aging in this population is defined by the absence of disease and the ability to stay functional.

Three of the five components of fitness are especially important to the older population: cardio-respiratory fitness — to maintain aerobic capacity; resistance training — to increase muscular strength and endurance; and flexibility — to improve balance and agility.

Leading a life that lacks physical activity is one of the risk factors that contributes to many chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancer. Unfortunately, 88 percent of those 65 years of age and older have at least one chronic disease as stated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Health professionals are concerned with the growing epidemic of “Behavioral Cancer” that has plagued our older adult population. It is the responsibility of the individual to adopt habits and maintain them, which will in turn contribute to leading a healthy lifestyle.

A healthy lifestyle is one that consists of regular physical activity, a nutritious diet, the absence of tobacco, moderate alcohol use, and regular physician visits.

These four simple habits have been shown to add 14 years to life from a study conducted on men and women ages 45-79 years old (Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter).

It is well known that adopting physical activity helps enhance and contribute to long, healthy living and acts as our own fountain of youth as it slows the natural decline we see with age.

Nonetheless, your genetics also have a large impact on your health across the life span. Genetics are the one thing that professionals in the field of health and fitness

Silver Threads

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cannot change, nor should they ignore when working with individuals to enhance their lifestyle.

Our mission as health promoters is to capture the interest level of people at a young age, which allows us to instill healthful life habits that contribute

to longevity.

At any age, it is up to the individual to make the effort to engage in healthy lifestyle habits that will improve both the body and the mind.

The way one can go about developing the healthy habit of engaging in 30 minutes of physical activity is by becoming aware of the many things that you can do throughout the day.

This goal can be accomplished by choosing activities that are fun and social and may involve a number of people: Grab a walking partner and take your dog for an extra 10-minute walk each day; park farther away from the store entrance; ride your bike to the library; throw a

Frisbee with a grandchild; play badminton with your family; take the stairs instead of the elevator.

These are just a few of the thousands of things that you can do to increase your daily activity.

A study conducted by the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy has shown that low-intensity exercise boosts energy levels up to 20 percent and decreases the feeling of fatigue by 65 percent (Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter).

“Behavioral Cancer” is not an inevitability of aging. There is no reason one should use increasing age to stray from attending to the four simple habits one can do to add vitality to life.

So start now, take those stairs, make your muscles work, condition your heart, and your body and outlook will benefit. You certainly deserve to live life as best as you can and to the fullest.

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Silver Threads is a weekly column written by people involved with the senior center.