

**- Elderly****TIPS ON HOW ACTIVE AGERS CAN BOOST THEIR IMMUNE SYSTEM**

The Philippine Star · 7 Dec 2021 · C2 · DR. GRACE CAROLE BELTRAN For inquiries, call 8401-84 11 or 0917-5711992, 0999-883-4802 or email at gc\_beltran@yahoo.com. Follow me on facebook @dragracebeltran.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle becomes paramount as a person gets older. Here are health and fitness tips that the elderly can do to make sure they remain in good health. Regular exercise. Exercise has a major effect on the immune system. Multiple studies have now linked moderate exercise with decreased rates of influenza, pneumonia, and other infections, as well as chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease. Staying active supports your immune system in a variety of ways, including reducing inflammation, increasing the presence of innate immune cells, and positively affecting your gut microbiome, all of which support your body's defense mechanisms.



Exercise increases blood flow throughout the body, which means that more immune cells can circulate at a higher rate. This immune response buildup has a measurable effect on health outcomes. A study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine found that among people who engaged in aerobic exercise five or more times per week, respiratory tract infection decreased by 40percent over 12 weeks.

Still, it's important to remember that being physically fit is not a fail-safe protection against COVID for older people and those with existing health conditions. Staying active reduces body fat and inflammation, which helps to fend off infections and prevent chronic conditions such as hypertension or heart disease. Exercising on a regular basis will greatly help anyone, most especially seniors, to maintain their mobility and strength while allowing them to improve their physical health in various aspects. However, be mindful to perform special, low-impact exercises designed for seniors that are effective but gentle.

Eat the right kinds of foods. Eating a healthy, balanced diet accompanied by regular exercise is essential in maintaining physical and mental health and wellbeing. Not only are these effective in preventing excess weight gain or maintaining weight loss, but healthier lifestyles are also associated with improved sleep and mood. In particular, physical activity improves brain-related functions and outcomes. Poor nutrition and physical inactivity can contribute to constipation, anemia, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, declining mental health, neurological disorders, muscle atrophy, vision problems, increased risk of falls, poor immune response, and increased risk of infections due to poor immune response.

Make sure to drink plenty of water. Older people should drink more water to reap the full cognitive benefits of exercise. Dehydration has been shown to impair exercise performance and brain function in young people, but less is known about its impact on older populations.

"Middle-aged and older adults often display a blunted thirst perception, which places them at risk for dehydration and subsequently may reduce the cognitive health-related benefits of exercise," a team of New England-based researchers wrote. Water is one of the most important nutrients. Drinking small amounts of fluids consistently throughout the day is important to keep healthy.

Stop smoking and regulate alcohol intake. Smoking any kind of tobacco reduces lung capacity, increases the risk of many respiratory infections and can increase the severity of respiratory diseases. COVID-19 is an infectious disease that primarily attacks the lungs. Smoking impairs lung function, making it harder for the body to fight off coronavir-

uses and other respiratory diseases. Available research suggests that smokers are at higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 outcomes and death.

Smoking also increases the risk of strokes, various types of cancer, heart attacks, and lung diseases, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. That is why it is vital for the elderly to refrain from smoking.

On the other hand, excessive alcohol consumption can weaken your immune system, making you more vulnerable to infections. Healthy older adults should limit alcoholic beverages to no more than one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men, according to the CDC.

Get enough sleep. Chronic sleep deprivation can promote decreased immune system function, as well as high levels of inflammatory blood markers and likelihood of cardiovascular disease. What's more, it is one of the biggest causes of fatigue, which makes it difficult to deal with the physically demanding challenges of the day. Sleeping well is essential for a healthy lifestyle and also to prevent the possibility of acquiring infectious diseases.

Aim for at least seven and a half to nine hours of sleep per night. To improve the quality of your sleep, make sure your room is dark, quiet, and cool. Keep a regular bedtime routine and limit daytime naps to no more than 45 minutes. Don't consume caffeine late in the day and don't drink water and other beverages one and a half hours before bedtime. Talk to your doctor if you have sleep problems to identify any underlying causes.

Avoid chronic stress. While it seems that avoiding stress is easier said than done, it is still worth noting that stress can lower immune function, cause insulin resistance, and lead to different cardiovascular diseases. It can also accelerate cellular aging and increase inflammatory markers. Try to avoid stress as much as you can.

Maintain a healthy weight. Obesity can worsen all arthritis-related issues, as well as lead to glucose intolerance, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. It also causes increased stress to muscles and joints, which is why it is important to stay active, eat a healthy diet and maintain a healthy weight as you age.

Spend time enjoying yourself. Go on a vacation; just make sure you are fully vaccinated and following the protocols for COVID 19 protection. Visit your dermatologist, hairstylist and rejuvenate yourselves. Have a body-pampering, relaxing massage therapy with a fully vaccinated masseuse.

Connect with others. Social-distancing guidelines amid the coronavirus outbreak do not have to keep you from feeling close to the ones you love. Senior isolation may lead to feelings of loneliness and depression, which can compromise immune health. It's important to find creative ways to stay connected. Call, text, or use video technology, such as FaceTime, Skype, or Zoom to stay in touch while ensuring the safety of you and your loved ones.

#### POWER UP

Modest amounts of a combination of these five essential vitamins and minerals will keep your body healthy.

Vitamin C has antibodies that help fight against bacteria and infections. Try consuming more oranges, grapefruit, broccoli, strawberries, red bell peppers and tomato juice.

Vitamin D is used to fight off infections, as well as works to maintain strong bones. You can find it in salmon, mushrooms, fortified milk, cereals and breads.

Vitamin A helps to regulate the immune system and protects against infections by keeping your tissues and skin healthy. It can be found in foods such as sweet potatoes, carrots, apricots, and spinach.

Vitamin E is another essential antioxidant whose job is to fight cell damage. Plant-based foods such as nuts and peanut butter are filled with vitamin E.

Zinc works as an antioxidant and boosts the metabolism along with helping to heal wounds. Meat, shellfish, beans, legumes, nuts and seeds are high-zinc food sources.

While it's generally considered safe to take a multivitamin, there's little evidence to suggest that taking high doses of certain vitamins and minerals individually will decrease your chances of getting sick. The best approach to preventing illness is to eat a diet that is high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, heart-healthy fats (nuts, seeds, avocados, olives, olive oil), and lean proteins to provide your body with the best variety of nutrients.

\*\*\*