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## PREVENTING FALLS: EXERCISE TIPS

- There are four types of exercise we all need for the best benefit to our bodies:
  - Endurance or cardiovascular activities: exercise that make us breathe harder.
  - Exercise that uses muscles and keeps them in shape.
  - Movements and activities that improve balance
  - Stretches that keep us flexible
- Follow these tips to be sure you are exercising safely:
  - Start slowly. Little by little, build up your activities and how hard you work at them. Doing too much, too soon, can hurt you, especially if you have not been active.
  - Don't hold your breath while straining - when using your muscles, for example. That could cause changes in your blood pressure. It may seem strange at first, but the rule is to breathe out while your muscle is working, breathe in when it relaxes. For example, if you are lifting something, breathe out as you lift; breathe in when you stop.
  - If you are taking any medicines or have any illnesses that change your natural heart rate, don't use your pulse rate as a way of judging how hard you should exercise. One example of this type of medicine is a type of blood pressure drug known as a beta blocker.
  - Use safety equipment to keep you from getting hurt. That means, for example, a helmet for bike riding or the right shoes for walking or jogging.
  - Unless your doctor has asked you to limit fluids, be sure to drink plenty when you are doing activities that make you sweat. Many older people tend to be low on fluid much of the time, even when not exercising.
  - Always bend forward from the hips, not the waist. If you keep your back straight, you're probably bending the right way. If your back "humps," that's probably wrong.
  - Warm up your muscles before you stretch. For example, do a little easy biking, or walking and light arm pumping first.
- Exercises should not hurt or make you feel really tired. You might feel some soreness, a little discomfort, or a bit weary, but you should not feel pain. In fact, in many ways, being physically active will probably make you feel better.
- Almost anyone can improve their health by becoming more active. But older adults should check with a doctor before beginning a new physical activity program. And if you've been inactive, start with short 5-10 minute intervals of moderate physical activity and gradually build up.



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- For a complete program of exercises, see "Exercise & Physical Activity: Your Everyday Guide from the National Institute on Aging" at <http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/ExerciseGuide/>.

**Acknowledgments:**

[National Institute on Aging](#)



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