

Don't Act Your Age!

Written by Ian Hart
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Who hasn't had someone tell you, at one time or another, to "act your age"?

Well, as we get older, not all of us actually want to – and there's nothing wrong with that. Though you may not be able to live forever, the good news is that you can add years to your life if you get off the couch and break a sweat. There's already amassed evidence showing that fitter people live longer. Now, an article published in this month's Archives of Internal Medicine, a journal of the American Medical Association, confirms a link between exercise and longevity.

As a fitness coach and personal trainer, this is great news for me, because I've been telling people this for years and a little more reinforcement doesn't hurt. Regular exercise, especially when combined with a healthy diet, helps prevent heart disease and cancer - two leading causes of death in the United States – as well as obesity, diabetes, and other medical conditions that can cause premature death. It's not just a matter of having a longer life, but a better one, too. We should focus on the quality of life, not just the length of it. Exercise will make you healthier, stronger, and fitter, so you can continue to be active and enjoy those extra years to the fullest.

Besides preventing cardiovascular disease and certain forms of cancer, as well as helping us with weight loss, exercise also provides other significant benefits. To improve your overall health and quality of life, make sure you're getting these types of trainings in your workout program:

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1. Strength training: As we age, our muscle mass declines and our bodies become weaker. In fact, most of us lose 3 to 5 percent of the mass per decade, and the decline increases after 50. However, strength training will not only build up muscle mass and keep the body strong, but also help prevent bone density loss that occurs in osteoporosis.

2. Vigorous and brisk activity: An example is interval training. Not only does it strengthen your heart and speed up your metabolism so you continue to burn fat and calories hours after your workout is over, but it also increases the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the brain and encourages increased brain activity and the formation of new brain cells. This process reduces the risk of developing Alzheimer's and other mental conditions that diminish our cognitive abilities as we age (like dementia).

3. Balance and flexibility exercises will improve your stability and coordination, keeping you from falling down and sustaining serious injuries - a big problem among older people. It will also increase your range of motion, decrease muscular tension, and strengthen your joints, tendons and ligaments - all of which will go a long way in preventing or relieving the pain and discomfort of arthritis.

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