

# Fitness For Your Body's EVOLUTION

By Dionne Ross

Most people agree that getting back into a vigorous workout routine is often a daunting task, which is why so many of us revert to the workouts we remember from our high school track days or time in the military. Often it's not long before we've blown out a knee and are forced back into the sedentary lifestyle we tried to escape. We find it difficult to come to terms with the fact that what worked at age 17 does not work at 35.

It's important to have a clear understanding of your health and body, and the challenges to anticipate as your body matures. Unfortunately, the infinite number of variables affecting the human aging process make it a complex matter. Aging involves more than the normal wear and tear of the body, but it also can involve physiological, social and environmental factors. Understanding these factors will allow you to choose exercises that are safe and effective for your fitness level and age.

The most important piece of advice is to consult your physician before beginning any exercise program. Understanding the unique needs of your body will allow you to take the best care of it. Before leaving your doctor's office, have a clear understanding of the following questions:

1. Is it safe for me to increase my physical activity?
2. Should I avoid any types of physical activity?
3. What symptoms could mean trouble during activity?
4. Do I need any tests before my activity?
5. Will any of my medications affect my ability to safely perform increased physical activity?
6. Do my medications need to be changed?

**Based on my experience and research, here are some recommendations for exercise based on age:**

## Young Adulthood (age 20-35)

This is the time when most people are at their height in physical and biological performance. Your muscles are more flexible and your body repairs itself more easily. This is a great time to experiment with new activities and find new ways to challenge your body. Chances are you do not yet have a family or a terribly hectic schedule, so establishing healthy lifestyle habits is easier to do.

**Recommended activities:** sports, high-impact exercise, resistance training and dancing

## Adulthood (35-45)

Social factors commonly influence your tendency to exercise more than physiological factors. Kids, spouse and career often occupy time to the point of not having time to place a priority on yourself. Choose exercises that are convenient and time-efficient. You might experience symptoms from a chronic injury that affects everyday function (e.g., knee pain due to years of high-impact cardio). It's best to choose exercises that are low impact and gentle on the joints. As early as 30, women can begin to experience loss of bone density. Resistance training and weight-bearing exercise can help reverse the effects of bone loss as well as more efficiently burn fat.

**Recommended exercises:** low-impact cardio (swimming, cycling, walking), weight training, time-efficient workouts

## Mature Adulthood (45-65)

Although this phase in life is characterized by increased disposable income, it also notes the loss of muscle mass and flexibility. The onset of osteoporosis in women is common, but can be halted by a calcium-rich diet and weight-bearing exercise. It's important for mature adults to maintain flexibility and keep muscles strong. Heart disease, high blood pressure, and adult onset type 2 diabetes are also critical factors that commonly affect individuals. Fortunately, these diseases can be prevented with an active lifestyle and healthy diet.

**Recommended exercises:** low impact/low-intensity cardio, weight training, flexibility training (e.g., yoga)

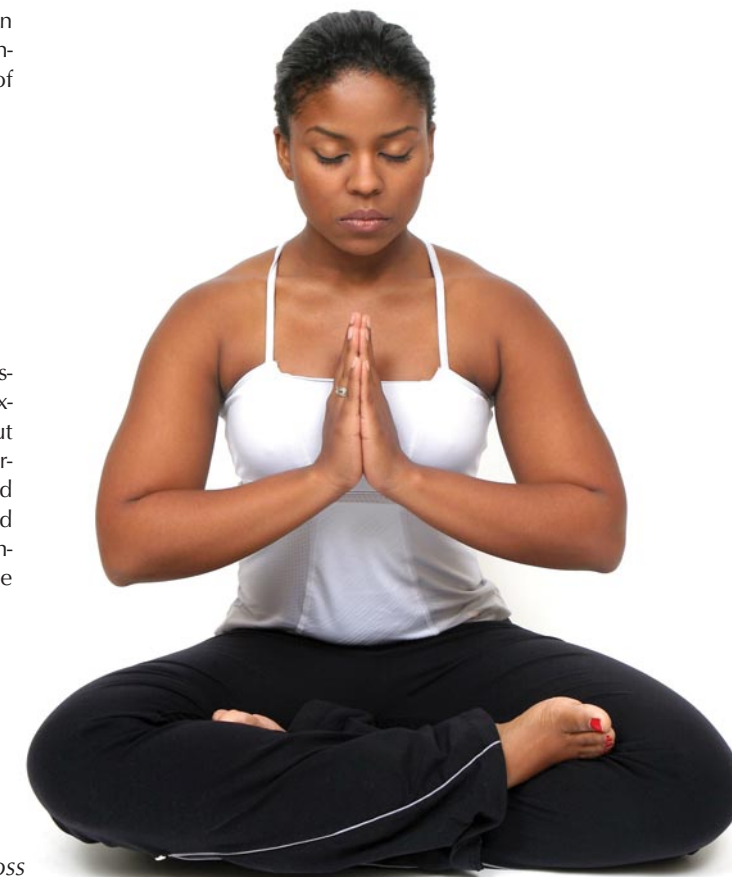
## Senior Citizen (65+)

Although your body may be slowing down, it's important to stay active. Osteoarthritis makes it more difficult to perform everyday tasks. In addition to a loss of strength and muscle mass, you will probably experience a loss of flexibility. Maintaining mobility and independence is most critical. Stay as active as you possibly can. Taking time to practice basic tasks like sitting and standing, reaching arms up, and bringing knees up will help maintain a healthy range of motion. Activities like gardening, swimming and walking keep the body moving and can be therapeutic. Above all, maintain clear and open communication with your doctor in order to keep him/her abreast of all the physical changes in your body.

**Recommended exercises:** water exercise, yoga for seniors, gardening, basic stretching

You've heard the adage, "You're only as old as you feel." It is completely possible for an active person in their 60s to be in better cardiovascular health than a sedentary 27 year old. Although time is the major factor in the aging process, lifestyle can be just as influential. Making the decision to be more active is a daily commitment and will bring a life time of benefits to come. **UIM**

*Dionne Ross is a personal fitness coach, motivational speaker and television personality. For more information, visit [www.dionneross.net](http://www.dionneross.net).*



Dionne Ross  
Photo by Dale Rempert