

Finding A Senior Friendly Fitness Facility

As you get into your golden years, you'll start to notice changes in your body. And some of these might not be changes that you want. The good news is exercise can improve the health of many seniors, and delay or even prevent diseases.

In addition to the physical benefits, senior fitness also offers both mental and emotional advantages. Exercising contributes to increased self-worth, independence, and happiness. It can also improve cognition and reduce the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

The Age-Friendly Fitness Phenomenon

An abundance of research points to the tremendous value of exercise for people of all ages and abilities. Unfortunately, today's training facilities or gyms can be intimidating places — particularly for older adults who are looking for something simple.

Luckily, with thousands of people turning 65 each day, there's a new breed of fitness centers aimed at attracting baby boomers. In fact, [**AARP's age-friendly facility and services locator**](#) can help you locate a nearby senior friendly gym or exercise program.

Remember:

It's important to talk with your doctor before starting any exercise regimen

What Should You Look For In a Fitness Center?

When searching for a fitness center, you should look for a facility that fits your own unique personality, and motivates you to come back and exercise on a regular basis.

Not sure where to begin? Use this checklist to help ask the right questions when evaluating a fitness center:

1 » Where is the facility located?

2 » What are the facility's operating hours?

3 » Does the facility specialize in any particular senior fitness classes?

Yes **No**

4 » Does the facility offer personalized programs or trainers for beginners?

Yes **No**

5 » If there's a pool, does the facility offer senior-focused water aerobics?

Yes **No**

6 » Is the facility affiliated with any senior fitness programs? (Like **Silver Sneakers**)

Yes **No**

7 » Are training staff certified?

Yes **No**

8 » What training equipment is available at the facility?

Free Weights **Weight Lifting Assisted Machines**

Rowing Machine **Stairmaster** **Treadmills** **Elliptical**

Stationary Bike **Medicine Balls** **Resistance Bands**

Other _____

9 » Is there handicapped parking?

Yes **No**

10 » Does the facility offer pick-up and/or drop-off services for seniors?

Yes **No**

11 » Is the facility currently accepting new members?

Yes **No**

12 » What is the cost for becoming a member?

13 » A. Is your insurance accepted there?

Yes **No**

B. What steps do you need to take ahead of time to ensure coverage?

14 » Is there a free trial period before you sign on?

Yes **No**

Exercises for Seniors

Once you've made your decision on a fitness facility you will want to determine your fitness goals. Generally, people exercise to see the number on the scale fall, pant sizes drop, and muscles grow. But at all ages, exercising can enhance the quality of life - in seniors, this is particularly true.

It is important for seniors to realize age is just a number and it should not control your exercise routines. Simple exercises can have a huge positive impact on a senior's health. They can also lower the risk of injury or illness in the future. If you're unsure where to begin, these short exercises are a good place to start:

Getting Started: Types of Exercising Activities

Sitting

- » Chest Stretch
- » Hip Marching
- » Arm Raises

Flexibility

- » Neck Stretch
- » Sideways Bend
- » Calf Stretch

Strength

- » Mini Squats
- » Leg Extensions
- » Wall Push-ups

Balance

- » Sideways Walking
- » Heel-to-toe Walk
- » Step-ups (or stairs)

For instructions, descriptive images and more information on these exercises and ones like them, [click here](#).

If you are consistent with the above routine, after just a few short weeks, you'll soon start see your strength, flexibility, and balance improve! And if you haven't already started using your new fitness facility, or are still in the process of selecting one, these exercises are a great way to give you a head start and some extra confidence.

No matter what stage of the fitness journey you are in, keep this checklist in mind, or take it with you, when you go out to visit a fitness facility. And remember, exercising might seem like hard work at first, but soon you'll be wondering how you went so long without it!

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