

Regular Exercise Slows Down the Aging Process

by Renee Moilanen of *Los Angeles Daily News*

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“Today many older adults are trading walkers and rocking chairs for barbells and treadmills. Research has long shown the benefits of exercising in staving off the aging process, but now health experts are urging seniors to start working out even if they’ve never exercised before.

Today, adults age 55 and older make up nearly 25 percent of the nation’s health club membership, a segment that has more than quadrupled since 1990.

Many of these older adults are starting exercise programs for the first time. For these fitness newbies, exercise may not extend life, but it can drastically improve the quality of it.

“No matter how late in life you start, you’ll see benefits,” said Jan Schroeder, a professor of kinesiology at California State University, and an expert in fitness for older adults.

Science backs up the claim. In a landmark 1994 study from Tufts University, researchers found that even the most frail and elderly adults benefited from exercise.

The study put nursing-home patients in their 80s and 90s on a resistance-training program. After 10 weeks, the exercisers had more than doubled their strength. They were walking faster and climbing stairs better

than their inactive peers.

Edita Antonian, a Glendale-based personal trainer, has worked with clients in their 80s. She spends a lot of time on exercise to improve posture, flexibility and range of motion, and also incorporates weight lifting and cardiovascular training.

Her older clients may need to use light weights or modify the exercises, but they all benefit from these workouts.

“Weights are very beneficial, because they’ll make the bones denser and help prevent osteoporosis,” a common ailment among seniors, Antonian said.

Older adults wanting to start a workout regimen will find lots of resources and money-saving deals, as gyms increasingly cater to this fast growing demographic. Several leading health insurers, including Blue Shield of California and Humana, will

buy gym memberships for their older clients. Many fitness centers offer specialized senior fitness classes.

These exercise classes teach newcomers the fitness basics and focus on exercises that improve balance, coordination, flexibility and strength, using props and modifications to ease the stress on arthritic joints.”

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