

FEATURED GUIDE: Active Body, Healthy Brain

Did you know that being active can help keep your brain healthy and slow down some of the changes that come with getting older?

Exercising as we age is important for many reasons, but you might be surprised to learn that being active as little as 2 hours a week can have powerful effects on your brain health and well-being. From walking with friends to picking up a new active hobby, there are many ways to exercise and stay active. We've put together a short guide with ideas, tips, resources, and more.



What the Research Says:

- » Exercise gets **more oxygen** to parts of the brain responsible for thought.
- » Exercise can help **create neurons** and increase the connections between them.
- » **It's all connected!** Exercise helps lower blood pressure, improves cholesterol levels, helps blood sugar levels, and can reduce stress... all of which help the brain as well as the heart.
- » **Go at your own pace.** Lower intensity exercise can be beneficial!

Types of Exercises:

Exercise can come in many different forms which can benefit you in different ways. Getting a good mix of different types of exercise is a great way to stay healthy.



» **Aerobic Exercise** is any activity that makes your heart and lungs work harder, like walking, swimming, or dancing.



» **Resistance/Strength Exercise** involves activities that make your muscles work harder, like lifting weights or using resistance bands.



» **Balance/Coordination Exercise** can help to reduce falls and improve confidence in movement.



» **Stretching/Flexibility Exercise** improves your body's range of motion and ability to move with ease.



» **Mind-Body Exercise** like yoga or tai chi combine physical activity with mental awareness or mindfulness.



Try Something New!

Active Aging programming at The Salvation Army Kroc Center (pg. 20) includes classes like Aqua Fit, Gospel-aerobics, Zumba, Tai Chi, Senior Fitness, Line Dance Classes and Walking Club. Call for more information.





Building New Habits

One common challenge to starting to exercise is psychological. You may feel negative emotions when you consider exercising: anxiousness, frustration, guilt, hopelessness. Building a habit is a great way to put aside these negative feelings before they get in the way of your health and well-being.



Follow these four steps:

1. **Decide on a goal** that you would like to achieve for your health.
2. **Choose a simple action** that will get you towards your goal which you can do on a daily basis.
3. **Plan when and where** you will do your chosen action. Be consistent: choose a time and place that you encounter every day of the week.
4. **Do the action** every time you encounter that time and place.

Exercising will get easier with time, and within about 10 weeks you could find yourself enjoying the habit of exercising without even having to think about it.



Tip: You will be more successful at building a “simple” habit (going for a walk) at first rather than a “complex” habit (doing a group of exercises at home)

Pictured left: Tyrone Mason stays active on the court teaching tennis lessons to all ages. To sign up for tennis lessons with him at Kenwood Park (ACE Tennis), call 312-671-4172.

Addressing Common Challenges to Exercising

Challenge: **Location**



Tip: Exercise can happen anywhere! Try out different options and see what feels is best for you (ex. home, large gym, small gym, community center, studio).

Challenge: **Pain**



Tip: Choosing a specific time of day to exercise and integrating a warm-up can help lessen pain.

Challenge: **Lack of Knowledge**



Tip: There is a learning curve about safe and effective exercise; work with professionals (Physical therapists, personal trainers, exercise physiologists, etc.) to feel more empowered!



Aquatic exercise is a low-impact workout all year round!

Find information about water exercise classes at these locations:

City of Chicago Classes | 312-744-4016

Don Nash Community Center Pool
1833 E. 71st St, Chicago, IL 60649 | 773-256-0906

The Salvation Army Kroc Center
1250 W. 119th St, Chicago, IL 60643 | 773-995-0151

South Side YMCA
6330 S Stony Island Ave, Chicago, IL 60637 | 773-947-0700

Shirley Ryan Ability Lab
541 N. Fairbanks Court
Mezzanine Level, Chicago, IL 60611 | 312-238-5001

For weekly exercise classes from your home, check out AARP’s Senior Planet website (pg. 21) for a variety of different classes and resources.



Tips to Stay Motivated!

Social Support - Exercise with others or have someone you check in with about your exercise!

Keep it fun! - There are lots of different ways to exercise, try out different classes and activities! Have you considered Pickle Ball, Water Aerobics, Dance Lessons?

Keep track - Have a journal or calendar where you can visibly see what you have accomplished.

Make it easy - Set up your supplies in advance (your clothes, equipment, etc.) and schedule it at a convenient time.

Routine - Be patient with yourself and persistent in trying to establish a routine, it will be worth it in the long run!

BodyParts Fitness (pg. 19) is a great resource for in-person and virtual exercise including line-dancing and group walks at the museum!

Silver Sneakers (silversneakers.com, or call 866-584-7389) is a fitness program available to adults 65+ through select Medicare plans that offers free memberships to participating gyms and more.



Scan the QR code for More Tips, Specialized Exercises, and Information on the National Institute on Aging’s website.