



Health Headlines - December 2013

LATE-LIFE EXERCISERS ARE MORE HEALTHY THAN ELDERLY NON-EXERCISERS

Duncan MacDonald
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British scientists have released a study tracking the health of 3,454 disease free men and women in England aged between their mid-50s and early 70s for over 8 years.¹ *Their research shows that even if you don't become active until later in life, your health will still benefit.*



Their analysis showed a direct link between the chances of being in the healthy aging group and their physical activity. *Those that exercised regularly every week were three times more likely to have the best mental and physical health* than those who did not exercise.



Even if you only took up exercise later in life, your health will still benefit. For those who remained active over the entire period of study, the chance of

being a **healthy ager** was over **seven times** that of non-active participants.²

The researchers defined **healthy agers** as *“those participants who survived without developing major chronic disease, depressive symptoms, physical or cognitive (mental) impairment.”*

Physical activity does not necessarily mean going to the gym or going for a run - **gardening or walking to the shops also counts.**

The Department of Health recommends all adults, including those over 65, do **150 minutes of physical activity a week.** Every 10 minutes counts, *so even getting off the bus a couple of stops early or taking a brisk walk on your lunch break will help.*

The take-home message really is *to keep moving when you are elderly.*

YOU ARE NEVER TOO OLD TO EXERCISE: Regular exercise staves off chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes and depression.³ The benefits of exercise include better circulation and improved bone, muscle, cardiovascular and organ health. Even the brain benefits from regular exercise - it slows brain tissue loss associated with aging and mental decline.

Earlier this year, researchers in France wrote in the *British Medical Journal* how they found *exercise may prevent fall-related injuries in older adults.*⁴

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Safety is an issue. Safety concerns may preclude someone from walking who has a high risk of falls and subsequent bone fracture. *Options may include using a stationary bicycle; lifting light weights or exercise while seated.* Exercise videos, classes and routines that can be done from a chair, rather than standing, may be helpful for this group.⁵

CONCLUSION: Sustained physical activity in older age is associated with improved overall health. **Significant health benefits were even seen among participants who became physically active relatively late in life.**

LIFE'S LIKE THAT



¹ British Journal of Sports Medicine, 25-Nov-2013

² BBC News - Health, 26-Nov-2013

³ Samantha Heller, NYU Langone Medical Centre, NY City

⁴ British Medical Journal, 29-Oct-2013

⁵ Sheri Colberg, PhD