

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Just do ... something

“It’s never too late to start.” That’s the word from a health professor at a large university on the topic of health behaviors as we age. Specifically she was talking about habits we need to prioritize in our 60s and 70s. The long-term goal: to maintain mobility and our independence as we age further.

Here are two things they suggest:

Balance - Long-term studies show that seniors who can stand on one leg for 10 seconds or more had lower rates of mortality and falls.

Take a look at the Mayo Clinic site (www.mayoclinic.org). Do a search for “balance exercises” for good ideas on how to get the most out of this. Mayo recommends aiming for holding the balance position for 30 seconds. The biggest benefits are strengthening the legs, ankles and core.

Strength training - It was pointed out that it’s too easy to become weak as we age. Whether we follow the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services guidelines of getting 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise a week or we focus on simple at-home exercises combined with daily walking, we just need to do something.

When it comes to how many daily steps we do, that’s going to depend on what “expert source” we read, because they vary. But most agree that if you’ve been very sedentary, try to start with 3,000 to 4,000 steps per day and ease your way up to the 6,000 to 8,000 range. If that seems like too much in a day, break it down into groups of perhaps 10 to 15 minutes at a time. It’s not how many you do all at once; it’s how many you do in a day or a week. It all adds up.

If you’ve been very sedentary, consider checking YouTube for seated chair exercises. Remember, just do something!

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CUSTOMER SERVICE: (800) 708-7311 EXT.

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