



## Flexibility Training

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Posted : Jan 10, 2018

EXERCISE

### Flexibility Training



Flexibility Training is to provide the healthcare provider with the necessary tools for helping the older adult start and/or sustain a flexibility training routine as a part of a well-rounded exercise program. Flexibility training offers the older adult with many benefits targeting improved range of motion, mobility, and functioning. There are minimal risks when flexibility training is done according to the guidelines provided and with the support of the healthcare provider team.

Use of the information and strategies presented in this chapter will...

- Improve your knowledge relative to flexibility training and older adults.
- Give you tools and techniques to facilitate a flexibility training program for older adults.
- Increase your stretching safety knowledge to minimize injury risk.
- Give you examples of upper and lower body stretches to implement with older adults.
- Provide you with a “how-to” for each stretching exercise presented.

**This chapter provides information related to...**

- Flexibility training for older adults.
- Tools and techniques for implementing a flexibility training program, specifically stretching with older adults.
- Sustaining a flexibility training program.
- Flexibility training safety and injury prevention.
- Performing upper and lower body stretching exercises.

## **Flexibility Training**

Stretching improves range of motion for activities of daily living, such as combing hair, getting dressed, or picking up objects from the floor. Stretching may also prevent pain or injury. Stretching exercises are thought to give older adults more freedom of movement to do the things they need and like to do. If an older

adult is more flexible, he or she is less likely to become injured or have low back pain.

Flexibility activities include stretching of major muscle groups to improve muscle length, flexibility, and joint health.

### **Helping Older Adults to Get Started with Stretching**



1. Choose stretches based on the older adult's needs (for example, if he or she has functional limitations in the upper body, have the older adult perform upper body stretches to target the limitations). Add other stretches as needed.
2. Have the older adult begin with 5 to 10 total stretches for the upper and lower body.
3. First, the older adult should warm up the muscles by walking, riding a bike, or another similar activity. Stretch muscles while they are warm and have increased blood flow for maximum benefit and minimal risk.
4. The older adult should hold the stretch without bouncing to a position of mild discomfort for 15-30 seconds.
5. Ensure that he or she continues breathing while holding stretches.
6. Encourage the older adult to stretch at least 2-3 days/wk, ideally 5-7 days/wk, preferably after an aerobic or strengthening workout.
7. If the older adult can't find the time to stretch, stretch while watching TV or before going to bed at night.
8. Some exercises are not appropriate for all older adults. If older adults have degenerative disk disease, osteoporosis, hip or knee replacements, have just undergone surgery or have any concerns at all please refer them to their healthcare provider.

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## About Author:

### *Exercise for Older Adults*

The material contained in this manual will help you assist older adults in starting a well-rounded exercise program. To help guide you through the process, a number of resources as well as examples on how to begin an exercise program are provided. A well-rounded exercise program consists of aerobic, strength, flexibility, and balance training. All four components are important in maintaining and promoting healthy aging in addition to helping those who are physically weak and frail to improve their functional ability. 0