

Over 60? Extend body's warranty

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Many experts have shared their conclusions about how cable television and the Internet have kept countless Americans on their behinds for longer periods of time. Ironically, while all this has been going on, scientists have been discovering the most about health and exercise—and how staying active can ward off a range of illnesses as people age.

What it comes down to is this: there are fewer and fewer excuses for letting the body run its course without exercise. For seniors, in particular, exercise has been linked to reduced risk for such ailments as prostate cancer, osteoporosis, heart disease and stroke, among others.

There has been much new research on the topic, with all signs pointing seniors to the exercise mat and away from the couch.

Indeed, with one out of six men confronting prostate cancer at some point in life, the Prostate Cancer Foundation recently released a new “Nutrition, Exercise, and Prostate Cancer” guide, a series of new strategies that help stem the development and progression of prostate cancer.

The key is combining exercise with a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and low in processed sugars and refined carbohydrates.

A new study from Dr. Stephen Freedland at Duke and the Durham Veterans Affairs Hospital also underscores the impact regular exercise has in protecting men from prostate cancer, while also making the disease less aggressive.

More than anything else, the combination of diet and exercise looks to be a strong pre-emptive step against many ailments.

With breast cancer a similarly daunting disease among women, healthy options unsurprisingly have been linked to lifestyle, particularly exercise and nutrition. With as little as four hours of exercise a week and a low-fat diet, the risk of breast cancer can be lessened. Abstaining from drinking alcohol has also been shown to decrease the risk of breast cancer.

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And there are plenty of ailments that plague both older men and women that can be helped by exercise. Among them is osteoporosis, which affects the bone density of people as they age. By focusing on exercises that have a direct impact on the skeleton, like basketball or jumping jacks, the symptoms of osteoporosis can be avoided.

New research also shows it's never too late for seniors to become active. Even those afflicted with Type 2 diabetes can help turn things around with an exercise regimen. And it's well-known that exercise can help strengthen arteries and potentially reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Of course, before starting any diet or exercise program, seniors should consult their doctors. But when it comes to health, a small series of simple lifestyle changes can help extend the body's warranty, making a world of difference in the golden years.