

Physical Activity Helps Support Brain Health

Physical activity is not just good for your body and mental health - it is also important to brain health. Evidence shows that regular physical activity may improve memory and attention by increasing blood flow to the brain. Exercise may also help increase a vital protein called brain-derived neurotrophic factor, aka “BDNF”. BDNF levels play an important role in supporting brain cell growth in memory centers of the brain, including the hippocampus. Research shows that people with Alzheimer’s disease often have lower levels of BDNF. This decrease is linked to more severe memory problems and brain health deterioration. The good news is that regular exercise can increase your BDNF levels, improving your brain’s health. *When you work out your body, you work out your brain!*

Other benefits of physical activity and exercise include:

- Reduced risk of health problems
- Improved mood, quality of life, and sleep quality
- Lower risk of developing diseases, such as cancer, stroke, and heart disease
- Active adults on average remain independent longer!

Questions & Facts about Starting a Fitness Regime

1. How should I start? The great thing about exercise is that it is never too late to start! There are plenty of ways to start moving your body. Walking is often a good place to start to increase your activity level. Other activities such as water aerobics, yoga, tai chi, stretching, gardening, and working outdoors are also great activities to engage in. Check out our list below for more ideas.
2. How often should I exercise and for how long? We used to think that people needed a lot of exercise to benefit, but now we know that even 5 minutes a day has benefits and shorter sessions throughout the day add to even more health benefits. Current guidelines encourage adults ages 65 and up to try moderate-intensity activities, such as brisk walking, for two and a half hours a week. For example, you could exercise for 30 minutes a day for 5 days a week. It is also recommended to try activities that strengthen muscles for 2 days a week. Remember that any amount of physical activity is better than none at all.
3. Is it safe for me to start or continue exercising? Speak to your doctor first if you haven’t exercised in a long time, or if you have any medical conditions. Your doctor will be able to tell you whether your time and intensity of physical activity is appropriate and beneficial for you. They will also be able to recommend different types of movements that are more personal to you and your interests. It is more harmful to your health to be inactive than to begin light-to-moderate levels of physical activity ([CDC, 2023](#)).

4. What is the best exercise for older adults? There is no single exercise that is best for everyone, so try to find something you enjoy doing. If possible incorporate different activities to help promote aerobics, stamina, strength, flexibility, and balance. Some people may enjoy running marathons while others prefer getting their exercise through yard work or completing household chores.

Tips for Safety

- Before starting any new exercise program, it's best for older adults to consult with a healthcare professional. Your primary care provider may also be able to recommend physical therapy to help get you started.
- Use Support: Use chairs, walls, or other supports as needed during exercises.
- Start Slow: Begin with lower intensity and gradually increase as strength and balance improve.
- Stay Hydrated: Ensure adequate hydration before and after exercise.

Ideas To Get Started

Walking, Strength & Balance Activities

- Walk around your neighborhood or local park
- Walk with a friend, your dog or animals at local shelters
- Take the stairs
- Park farther away when you run errands
- Ditch the car! Walk or bike to a destination
- Grab some snowshoes
- Try a mall walk
- Try mind-body exercises, such as Chair Yoga and Tai Chi
- Increase strength and balance with Resistance Band Exercises, Wall Push-Ups, Chair Squats, and Lunges

Get outside

- Find a hike for your fitness level
- Go fishing
- Ride a bike
- Go bird watching
- Go cross country skiing
- Go for a swim in a community pool or natural water source
- Yard work
- Shovel snow
- Volunteer for a beach or trail cleanup
- Use fitness equipment at a playground

Exercise around the house

- Vacuuming and other household chores can get your body moving and burn calories
- Put on your favorite tunes and dance around the kitchen
- Follow free guided stretching or yoga videos online
- Stand up and stretch for a few minutes every hour no matter what you are doing
- Look for an online fitness program you can do at home

Hit the gym

- Ask staff to show you how to use unfamiliar equipment
- Try the treadmill, stair stepper, or stationary bike
- Use free weights or your body weight for strength training
- Work with resistance bands
- Sign up for a group fitness class
- Bring a buddy for a partner workout

Be adventurous!

- Take a dance lesson
- Join a water aerobics class
- Start a fitness club with neighbors and friends
- Host a yard game tournament with family, friends, or neighbors

Not sure what type of activity is right for you? Below is a list of different types of activities followed by a variety of resources and locations to get active.

Aerobic Exercises include activities that use large muscle groups in repetitive ways to increase your heart rate and breathing rate such as biking or running.

Balance helps you to improve your ability to stay upright and maintain control of your body's movement. Activities include standing on one foot, walking sideways, yoga, tai chi, or dancing. Balance activities can also help reduce the risk of falling.

Barre fuses the best of pilates, yoga, aerobics, and elements from the strengthening exercises that dancers do to improve your posture, flexibility, overall body strength, and balance.

Chair Yoga is designed to reduce stress, and combines the strength, flexibility, balance, and mind/body connection of traditional yoga poses with the support of a sturdy chair for safety.

Dancing is the movement of the body in a rhythmic way. It provides mental and physical stimulation on top of physical exercise.

Gardening can provide light exercise through planting, watering, raking, and weeding. It provides mental and physical stimulation on top of physical exercises.

Mat Pilates is a strengthening and lengthening form of exercise that focuses on your core muscles while also training your arms and legs with body weight or light dumbbells while also improving your flexibility.

Reformer Pilates combines the traditional principles and movements of mat Pilates with a reformer machine and gives a full body workout with the use of light resistance. The Cadillac machine is easy to get started on.

Strength Training is a type of exercise that uses resistance to build muscle strength and size. It involves making your muscles work harder than they normally do often by using weights. Strength training has many benefits, including improving mobility so that you can maintain independence in your daily life.

Stretching lengthens and flexes muscles and tendons to improve flexibility, range of motion, and muscle tone to prevent muscle stiffness.

Swimming is a low-impact exercise that can be good for people with joint pain or other conditions that prevent them from running or other weight-bearing activities and it improves strength, coordination, and cardiovascular fitness.

Tai Chi is an enjoyable, slow-paced exercise that can improve balance, relieve pain, reduce stress, and improve health and ability to do things.

Walking is a low-impact exercise that can be done almost anywhere, including your neighborhood, local parks, gyms, or shopping centers.

Water Aerobics is a low-impact exercise that is easy on the joints while improving strength and cardiovascular fitness.

Yard Work is a moderate-intensity exercise that helps meet your physical activity needs. Examples include mowing the lawn, raking the leaves, painting fences, and shoveling snow.

Local Fitness Classes

Note: Other locations may also have similar activities and this list is not exhaustive.

Arthritis Exercise Program - A group exercise class for people with arthritis and/or arthritis-related disease, who are new to exercise, have been sedentary, or are returning to exercise after recovering from illness or injury. This is held at the Durgin Center in Brewer, ME.

Black Bear Fit - A 12-week team-based small group training program that meets with a trainer twice a week. This is held at the UMaine Recreation Center.

Bone Builders Program - An exercise program designed to increase balance, muscle strength, and bone density through mild weight training exercises with a focus on osteoporosis. This is held at the UMaine Center of Aging with programs located in Old Town, Orono, Hampden, and Bangor.

CrossFit - A strength and conditioning workout that is made up of functional movements like squatting, pulling, and pushing performed at a high intensity level. This is held at Bangor CrossFit.

Enhance Fitness - Designed to help older adults become more active, energized, and empowered to sustain independent lives using dynamic cardiovascular exercises, strength training, balance, and flexibility. This is held in Damariscotta, ME through Healthy Living in ME.

Fit over 50 - Classes designed for people aged 50 or older to improve overall fitness and develop cardio, strength, balance, core, and flexibility. This is held at the Bangor YMCA and the UMaine Recreation Center.

Matter of Balance - Designed for older adults who want to reduce fear of falls and increase physical activity. This is held through Healthy Living in ME.

Neuro Health Program - Physical wellness activities include cardiovascular conditioning, functional strength training, and improving balance, mobility, and flexibility. This is held at the Bangor YMCA.

Senior Strength and Balance - Designed to help improve strength and flexibility around the shoulders, ankles, knees, and hip joints, all while improving your reaction time. This is held at Sunshine's Fitness Studio.

Senior Yoga - Includes traditional yoga poses designed to enhance flexibility and balance. This is held at the UMaine Recreation Center.

Silver Sneakers Classic - This workout includes fall prevention drills and exercises to improve strength and endurance. This is held at the Old Town-Orono YMCA and the UMaine Recreation Center.

Silver Sneakers Splash - A shallow-water exercise class that uses a signature splash board to increase movement and intensity options. Splash is suitable for all skill levels and is safe for non-swimmers. This is held at the Old Town-Orono YMCA.

Strong for Life - Designed for middle-aged and older adults to help improve balance and overall muscle strength by using weights and other resistance exercises. This is Held at the Bangor YMCA.

Walking Buddy Program – Make a new friend and get active! This exercise program pairs folks with a walking buddy through the UMaine Center on Aging.

Like to Walk? There are local parks or waterways, like the Brewer Riverwalk or Cascade Park, Bangor City Forest, Brown Woods Trail, Central Penjajawoc Preserve, Orono Bog Walk, Hirundo Wildlife Refuge, and Walden-Parke Preserve in Bangor, or go to the Bangor Mall and walk around inside.

Local Gyms and Programs

Gyms offer a wide array of different types of physical activities, including a variety of group classes, stationary bikes, and weight training facilities. Gyms also vary in pricing and often offer discounted rates based on age and income. They also often offer free trial passes so that you can experiment and find the right one for you.

Bangor YMCA

Phone: 207-941-2808 Address: 17 2nd St, Bangor, ME

Website: <https://bangory.org/>

- Cost: \$41 per month for adults aged 62 or older, there is a [sliding scale fee](#) for those who are eligible
- Personal training available for additional cost

The Neuro Health Program for Patients and their Caregivers at Bangor YMCA

Phone: 207-941-2808 Address: 17 2nd St, Bangor, ME

Website: <https://bangory.org/fitness/health-management/neuro-health/>

- Program designed for adults with Parkinson's disease, dementia, and brain injury and their care partners to provide social, emotional, physical, and quality-of-life improvements

Old Town-Orono YMCA

Phone: 207-827-9622 Address: 472 Stillwater Ave, Old Town, ME

Website: <https://otoymca.org/>

- Cost: \$30 or more per month for adults aged 62 or older
- Personal training available for additional cost

Planet Fitness

Phone: 207- 262-5800 Address: 635 Broadway, Bangor, ME

Website: <https://www.planetfitness.com/gyms/bangor-me>

- Cost: \$15 a month for a classic membership

University of Maine Recreation Center

Phone: 207-581-1082 Address: 22 Hilltop Rd, Orono, ME

Website: <https://umaine.edu/campusrecreation/>

- Cost: \$50 per month + Fees for Programs developed for Older Adults
- Personal training available for additional cost

Community-Based Classes & Services

Durgin Center

Phone: 207-941-2865 Address: 274 State St, Brewer, ME

Website: <https://eaaa.org/classes-events/>

- Cost: range from \$7 to \$9 per class

Bangor Humane Society - Volunteer to Walk a Dog

Phone: 207-942-8902 Address: 693 Mt. Hope Avenue, Bangor, ME

Website: <https://www.bangorhumane.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

- Cost: Free

Healthy Living for ME

Phone: 800-620-6036 Email: info@healthylivingforme.org

Website: <https://healthylivingforme.org/>

- Hosts sessions online and in Waterville, Oakland, Presque Isle, and Damariscotta ME
- Cost: \$0 for most classes, but some courses range from \$20 to \$45
- Contact Information for specific locations and programs:
 - Waterville: Melissa Emmons 207-626-7350
 - Oakland: Monica Hawk 207-620-1642
 - Presque Isle: Nicholas Paul 207-764-1972

- Damariscotta: Robin Maginn at rmaginn@clcymca.org
- Online: Monica Hawk 207-620-1642
- Prices and locations are subject to change

UMaine Center on Aging

Phone: 207-262-7926 Address: 25 Texas Avenue, Camden Hall, Bangor, ME

Website: <https://mainecenteronaging.umaine.edu/>

- Bone Builders Program:
 - Located in Old Town, Orono, Hampden, and Bangor
 - Cost: Free
- Walking Buddy Program
 - Located in Penobscot, Piscataquis, Hancock, and Washington Counties
 - Cost: Free

Training, Yoga, & Pilates Centers (some can be expensive)

Adam Clark Fitness - Personal Trainer for adults over 40

Phone: 207-223-7662 Address: 81 Center St, Brewer, ME

Website: <https://adamclarkfitness.com/>

- Cost: Ranges from \$200-\$500 per month depending on the frequency of visits per week

Beyond Movement Pilates

Phone: 207-570-3337 Address: 263 State St, Suite 35, Bangor, ME

Website: <https://www.beyondmovementpilates.com/>

- Cost: \$12-\$45 for drop ins or \$80-\$320 for monthly packages

Body Wise Pilates

Phone: 207-951-4213 Address: 96 Harlow St Suite 118, Bangor, ME

Website: <https://bodywisebangor.com/>

- Cost: \$15 per class

CrossFit Bangor

Phone: 844-543-8232 Address: 130 Perry Rd, Bangor, ME

Website: <https://crossfitbangor.com/>

- Cost: \$145 per month for membership or \$20 class drop in

OM Land Yoga

Phone: 207-249-9180 Address: 6 State St, Bangor, ME

Website: <https://www.omlandyoga.com/>

- Cost: \$18 drop-in classes, \$149 for 10 classes

Peak Wellness

Phone: [207-441-4172](tel:207-441-4172) Address: [25 Franklin St, Bangor, ME](#)

Website: <https://peakwellnessandtraining.com/>

- Cost: \$10-\$20 per class, memberships available

Skye Fitness - Personal Training

Phone: [207-370-2612](tel:207-370-2612) Address: [170 Park St, Bangor, ME](#)

Website: <https://www.skyefitness.com/>

- Cost: \$300-\$600 ten-pack personal training sessions
- Drop-in barre classes for \$20

The Spiral Goddess Collective

Phone: [207-949-4137](tel:207-949-4137) Address: [16 State St, Bangor, ME](#)

Website: <https://www.thespiralgoddesscollective.com/>

- Cost: Sliding scale of drop-in classes and monthly/annual memberships

Sunshine's Fitness Studio

Phone: [207-991-8070](tel:207-991-8070) Address: [930 Stillwater Ave, Bangor, ME](#)

Website: <https://sunshinesfitnessstudio.com/>

- Cost: \$10-\$12 drop-in classes

Wilcox Wellness Studio

Phone: [207-510-4460](tel:207-510-4460) Address: [224 Union St, Bangor, ME](#)

Website: <https://www.wilcoxwellnessfitness.com/>

- Cost: \$25 drop-in classes
- Personal training available for additional cost

Online Resources

AllTrails

Website: <https://www.alltrails.com/>

- Maps and information about hiking trails in your area

The Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) Teal Room

Website: <https://alzfdn.org/afatealroom/>

- Virtual courses on fitness and movement as well as recorded classes_

AARP Senior Planet

Website: <https://seniorplanet.org/virtual-fitness-wellness-events/>

- Different wellness and fitnesses classes throughout the week held on ZOOM

Silver Sneakers Online

Website: <https://tools.silversneakers.com/Search/OnlineClasses>

- Live online classes for Silver Sneakers members

YouTube. Check out the free options available on YouTube. For instance:

Slow and Gentle Yoga with Adrienne

Website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFhG-ZzLNN4>

- A YouTube channel with Yoga for Seniors

Senior Fitness with Meredith

Website: <https://www.seniorfitnesswithmeredith.com/homepage/>

- A YouTube channel with free workouts for seniors

YogaWorks

Website: <https://yogaworks.com/classes/>

- On-demand and Live Classes: “Yoga and fitness classes that will increase your strength, flexibility, and stability, plus improve your mental clarity and calmness”. Now offering Older Adult focused classes!
- Cost: Varies and often there are promotions and the ability to pre-tax HSA/FSA money. There is a free trial available to see if it is right for you.