



# This Simple Exercise Routine Can Prevent Mobility Problems

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You can even do it at home.



By Barbara Brody

Calling all couch potatoes: It's time to dust off your sneakers. New [research](#), published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, found that embracing regular activity is key to maintaining your independence well into your senior years. And that appears to be true even for people who haven't been in great shape for quite some time.

Researchers took 1,635 people in their 70s and 80s who were classified as being at least moderately disabled (they were deemed less functional than others of the same age) and assigned them to one of two groups: The exercise group walked for 30 minutes daily and also did balance and muscle-strengthening exercises; the other group attended health information workshops. Members of both groups participated in the trial for an average of 2.6 years.

At the end of the study, people in the exercise group were substantially less likely to suffer from severe mobility problems. Most were able to climb up and down stairs and walk at least a quarter of a mile. "The biggest message is that staying active will preserve your ability to get around in the community, so you won't have any trouble doing things like getting out of your car and walking across a parking lot," says lead study author Todd Manini, Ph.D., associate professor of aging and geriatric research at the University of Florida Institute on Aging.

Manini notes that the combination of strength and aerobic exercise is really important, but that extra equipment is entirely optional. "All the exercises done by study participants were designed to be feasible in the real world," he

explains. Walking, for starters, is a type of cardiovascular exercise that you can do just about anywhere (though if you prefer to get your cardio on a treadmill or in a [SilverSneakers class](#), that's fine too). As for strength and balance moves, the ones used in the study all involved working against your own body weight—think chair squats and leg raises—so you don't need to become skilled at using weight machines unless you want to be. A simple exercise routine may be enough.

The exercise routine used in the study was designed to fall in line with the U.S. government's [guidelines for physical activity](#) in older adults; the balance and strength moves were adapted from a guide developed by the National Institutes on Aging that you can access right [here](#).

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Walk	Walk around the house for 10 minutes, 3 times a day.	Walk around the house for 15 minutes, 3 times a day.	Walk around the house for 20 minutes, 3 times a day.	Walk around the house for 25 minutes, 3 times a day.	Walk around the house for 30 minutes, 3 times a day.
Rest day	Rest day	Rest day	Rest day	Rest day	Rest day

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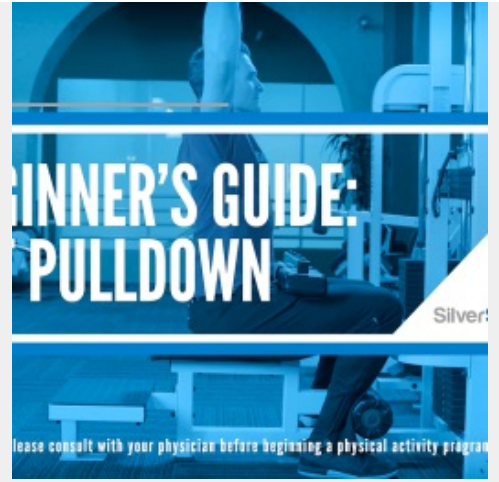
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