

Fitness After Menopause

It's inevitable for all women, and causes many changes. Triggered by low levels of the female hormone oestrogen, menopause symptoms range from mental (sadness, depression) to physical (chronic back pain, stiffness, insomnia, irregularity, poor circulation, weak muscles, shortness of breath, and loss of bone mass). Although it cannot be prevented, some of its negative effects can be minimized with exercise and relaxation techniques. Exercise can do a lot more than we could ever imagine. For starters, a minimum of four 30-minute exercise sessions each week will help to keep a women's body to produce a little oestrogen by stimulating the adrenal glands to convert the male hormone androstenedione into oestrogen. When continued over several months, exercise helps build stronger bones and lowers the risk of osteoporosis as compared with non-exercisers. Although every woman is different, most women lose upwards of 25 percent of bone mass by the age of 65. This is accompanied by reduced muscle strength and flexibility, making the body less adaptive and more prone to injuries. In fact, scientists have proved that bone loss begins around the age of 35, proceeds slowly up to the menopause, and then accelerates during the five to seven years after the menopause, when oestrogen levels are low.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR EXERCISE

A reduced risk of heart disease - The risk of heart disease increases for women after menopause due to a deficiency of oestrogen, which has a protective effect on the heart. A lower chance of developing diabetes mellitus - Blood sugar imbalance is likely after menopause. Maintenance of muscle tone and strength - To safeguard against the loss of muscle mass post menopause.

WHICH TYPE OF EXERCISE IS BEST?

The type of exercise that you take obviously depends largely on resources, how much time you have to devote to exercise and your own personal preference. One can choose from a gym, fitness classes, sports centers and local YMCAs. For those who would rather exercise at home, there are many excellent exercise videos another publications on the market. Studies show that women performing aerobic activity or muscle-strength training reduced mortality from cardio vascular disease and cancer. Activities like walking, cycling swimming and rowing work well.

DEEP MUSCLE RELAXATION

Try yoga, meditation, deep breathing, peaceful environments. This simple exercise can be very useful -Find a peaceful place. Lie on your back, or sit in a comfortable chair, and close your eyes. Tense your right hand (or left, if your are left-handed), then let it go loose. Imagine it feels heavy and warm. Repeat with your right forearm, upper arm and shoulder, then move on to the right foot, lower leg, upper leg. Now do exactly the same thing with the left side of your body. By the time you have finished, your hands, arms and legs should feel heavy, relaxed and warm.

About the Author

Find some of the stories that appear in the print magazine each month, health calculators, workout slide shows, and fitness.

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