Physical Activity

EXAMPLES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

AEROBIC EXERCISES

- Take the stairs
- Go for a brisk walk
- Go for a hike in nature
- Use an under-desk elliptical while working or watching television
- Step up and down on a low, sturdy stool and alternate feet each time you step up
- Use a free exercise app like Johnson & Johnson's "7 minute workout"
- Exercise while watching television using a recumbent bike, treadmill, or elliptical machine
- Do some yard work–rake leaves, pull weeds, push a lawn mower, sweep, etc.
- Take a water aerobics class or walk in the pool
- Use a rowing machine
- Ride a bike
- Play golf and walk on the course. Do not use a cart
- Jump up and down, jump rope, or do jumping jacks
- Go kayaking
- Play tennis
- Go for a swim
- Take dance lessons or a Zumba class
- Play pickleball
- Track your steps. Aim for 7,000 steps per day
- Join a gym or Silver Sneakers program
- Take exercise classes in the community or online

HIGH INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING (HIIT)

High intensity interval training, or HIIT, provides a more efficient workout compared to steady state exercise (eg, walking on the treadmill at the same pace for the entire workout).

HIIT can be blended with any type of aerobic activity such as swimming, riding a stationary bike, walking on a treadmill, or using an elliptical. You simply alternate between intervals of low-intensity activity and high-intensity activity. The bursts of high-intensity activity are short, typically 10-30 seconds, and the periods of low-intensity activity are longer, about 1 minute.

For example, while using an elliptical, do a warm-up for 3 minutes, then increase the resistance on the machine so it will require maximum effort to keep moving at the same pace. Continue for 30 seconds. The goal is to push yourself, but doing so safely so you do not get hurt. Then decrease the resistance on the elliptical and continue at a comfortable pace to catch your breath and recover for approximately 1 minute. Continue alternating between high-intensity and low-intensity during your workout.

Physical Activity

EXAMPLES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

STRENGTH TRAINING EXERCISES

- **Squats:** To perform 1 squat, stand with your feet hip width apart, toes pointing forward. Bend your knees and squat down until your thighs are parallel with the floor. Keep your back straight. Then come back up to standing.
- **Alternative squats:** Every time you get up from a chair or the toilet, raise and lower your body 5 times without using your arms for assistance.
- **Push-ups:** Modified push-ups can be done with your knees on the floor. Alternatively, do push-ups against the wall or kitchen counter.
- **Abdominal crunches:** Lay on your back with your knees bent, hands behind your head. Lift your head and shoulders up from the floor. Lift up just enough to engage your abdominal muscles. Keep your face pointed toward the ceiling.
- **Lift weights:** Carry light hand weights or wear ankle weights while walking for exercise.
- **Planks:** Hold a plank pose for as long as possible. See image below:
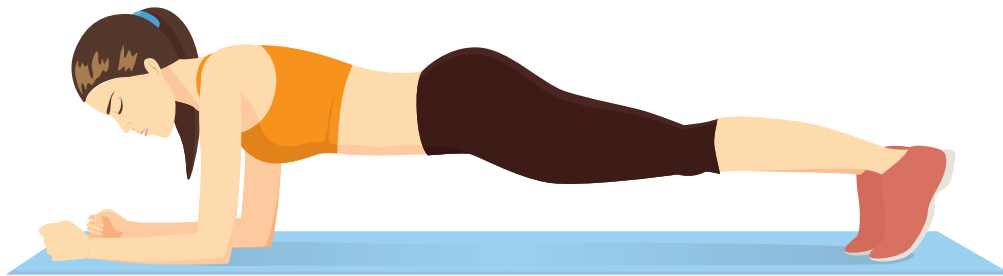
BALANCE AND FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES

- Take a yoga or tai chi class
- Do some gentle stretching first thing in the morning or before bed
- While brushing your teeth, balance on 1 foot for 60 seconds, then balance on the other foot for 60 seconds

BENEFITS OF DANCE FOR BRAIN HEALTH

Dance is a fun activity that involves such brain functions as sight, hearing, movement, rhythm, balance, and coordination. Any activity that stimulates several brain functions, such as dancing, is considered a complex activity. Complex activities protect the brain from cognitive decline.

Dance improves brain health through:

- **Aerobic exercise.** Dancing increases your heart rate and improves blood flow to the brain. Greater heart/lung fitness is associated with less cognitive decline
- **Social interaction.** (when dancing with others)
- **Attention.** Learning new steps requires focus and concentration

There are many styles of dance including square dancing, ballroom dancing, line dancing, and freestyle dancing.

Research suggests ballroom dancing can protect against dementia and reduce depression in older adults. Any type of dancing will be beneficial because being active is associated with better cognitive function.

Ballroom dance classes can improve brain function, mood, and behavior.
Researchers evaluated the effects of ballroom dancing in 129 adults, average age 67, with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). MCI indicates a mild impairment of brain functions and memory (e.g., sometimes forgetting things and having difficulty finding the rightword).

The participants were randomly assigned to an intervention group or control group. The intervention involved 60-minute ballroom dance classes twice a week for 10 months.

After 10 months of the dance intervention, the participants in the dance group demonstrated significant improvements in cognition, reaction time, visuospatial skills, selective attention, attentional switching, mood, and behavior.

There were no improvements in the control group. In fact, these participants showed a decline in cognitive performance of many tasks at the 10-month follow-up.

Lazarou I, Parastatidis T, Tsolaki A, Gkioka M, Karakostas A, Douka S, Tsolaki M. International Ballroom Dancing Against Neurodegeneration: A Randomized Controlled Trial in Greek Community-Dwelling Elders With Mild Cognitive impairment. *Am J Alzheimers Dis Other Demen*. 2017 Dec;32(8):489-499. doi: 10.1177/1533317517725813. Epub 2017 Aug 25. PMID: 28840742.