

## Aging

Aging is one of the things in life that cannot be stopped. However, two choices are available. People can either speed up the process, or slow it down.

*Aging is a natural occurrence, and has a different effect on different body parts. Changes associated with aging can be slowed through moderate and regular exercise.*

### Aging and Muscle

It is normal to lose muscle mass and strength as a part of the aging process. However, not all of this loss is due to aging. Some is due to disuse atrophy. In simple terms this means use it or lose it. People who have had a cast removed after several weeks often experience decreased size and strength of the muscles. Maintaining an active lifestyle can dramatically delay the loss of muscle tissue.

### Aging and Bone

As people age it is common for their bones to lose some strength due to a loss of calcium. In severe cases, this loss leads to a condition known as osteoporosis or brittle bones. Studies have demonstrated that exercise is one the best ways to help bones maintain calcium and maintain strength.



### Aging and Endurance

It is normal to lose some endurance through the course of aging. As people age, changes take place throughout the respiratory and circulatory system. Lung capacity decreases slightly, arteries and veins lose some of their flexibility, and the ability of muscles to use oxygen is reduced. While these changes cannot be stopped, they can be slowed by maintaining an active lifestyle.

### Aging and Body Fat

Contrary to popular belief, muscle does not turn to fat. This is physically impossible. However, it is possible to lose muscle and gain fat, resulting in the illusion. The loss of muscle and increase in fat is at least partially the result of decreased activity. A lower activity level leads directly to less fat burning, more fat storing, and less stimulation to the muscles.

# AGING

## Talking Notes

### POINTS TO REVIEW

#### 1. Aging is normal; we can either slow the process down or speed it up.

There are varieties of changes that take place in our bodies as we age. It is normal to lose some amount of muscle, bone, and overall endurance during the aging process. The important thing to keep in mind is that while we are unable to stop these processes from occurring by remaining active, we are able to slow these changes down.

#### 2. Preparing our bodies for the aging process starts now.

Many people have a number of limitations when they retire because of a bad back or bad knees. It is important to realize that for most of us, the knees do not suddenly go bad. It is the accumulation of activities, over our lifetime, that contributes to this gradual wearing out process. Simply by using our bodies a little smarter, we can age in a way that will allow us to enjoy everything we have worked hard for.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

#### 1. How can injuries impact your ability to do what you want as you get older?

#### 2. What are ways to minimize or slow down the effects of aging?

#### 3. What is meant by, use it, or lose it?

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