



Exercise is the secret to living a longer life.



Being active is not only a great way to stay healthy; it is also a secret to living longer. According to the National Institute on Aging, regular exercise can delay diabetes and heart disease; reduce arthritis pain, anxiety and depression, and can help people stay independent

longer (www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/exerciseforseniors.html).

During the summer months, nice weather is plentiful. The nice weather gives you the opportunity to take advantage of getting out of the house, enjoying nature, and getting fit.

Go for a hike, ride your bike, walk in the park, or swim laps at the local pool. Many parks also offer fun outdoor games like bocce ball, badminton, horseshoes and other recreational activities. Western Pennsylvania has so many outdoor adventures to discover. Get off the couch this summer and try some of these exciting ways to stay active and have fun!

Walking/Hiking

Walking is the easiest and most affordable (free) way to stay fit at any age. You can gather your friends and start a walking group in your community. This is a great way to have fun, be social, and stay active! If you would rather get out of the neighborhood you can drive to your community's local park. Most community, county, and state parks offer exercise trails for walking and hiking. Hiking is a great outdoor activity for the nature lover! If you want to learn more about nature, many parks offer walking and hiking nature tours throughout the summer.

Biking

Biking is another great way to stay fit in the summer. There are many places in Western Pennsylvania that offer incredible biking trails. The Youghiogheny River Trail (www.youghrivertrail.com/) offers a bike trail perfect for the beginner biker. Also, if you are willing to make a day trip, Ohiopyle provides a smooth biking trail surrounded by breathtaking views (www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/ohiopyle.aspx). You don't even need to bring your own bike to some of the trails. For a small fee you can rent bikes from facilities in and around the area.

Swimming

The best place to cool off on a hot summer day is at the local swimming pool. Many parks throughout Western Pennsylvania provide an outdoor pool for all ages during the summer. Some pools even offer daily adult-only swim times if you would rather relax and enjoy your swim kids free. At most of the pools there is a small entrance fee. Fortunately, there are discounts offered to families and seniors who are 65 and older.

Other Activities

Some other fun activities for the summer are badminton, bocce ball, and horse shoes. These outdoor games can be played in the back yard or in a community park. Your community park may have the equipment to play these games. Ask the park office whether or not they provide equipment for these activities.

When doing any form of physical activity the National Institute of Health

(www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/ExerciseGui)

[de/03_go.htm](#)) suggests it is necessary to take these precautionary steps to avoid injury:

- When beginning physical activities start slowly.
- Wait 2 hours after eating a meal before doing any physical activity.
- Wear appropriate shoes and comfortable, loose-fitting clothes.
- When outside, wear a hat and put on sunscreen with a sun protective factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.
- Drink water before, during, and after physical activity.
- Exercise outdoors during the coolest parts of the day.
- When exercising outdoors, pay attention to your surroundings and inform a friend or family member of your outdoor activity location.
- Make sure you carry identification with you.
- Take your cell phone.

Stop exercising if you:

- Have pain or pressure in your chest, neck, shoulder, or arm
- Feel dizzy or sick to your stomach
- Break out in a cold sweat
- Have muscle cramps
- Feel severe pain in joints, feet, ankles, or legs

Ask your local library about parks and other recreational facilities in your area. It is important to remember that before doing any type of physical activity to talk to your doctor about what activities fit you best. Being physically active and getting at least 2 1 / 2 hours of physical activity a week are part of the “10 Keys” to Healthy Aging.

Are you getting enough exercise? If not, get out this summer, enjoy the weather, and get into shape to continue living for a “Healthier Tomorrow.”

This column was written by Kayse Gearhart, Student Intern for the Center for Healthy Aging. For more information on this article, call 412-624-3217. The Center for Healthy Aging is a part of the Department of Epidemiology in the Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh. It is one of 33 Prevention Research Centers in the United States funded by the Centers for Disease Control. For questions or more information, contact David J. Fetterman, Community Outreach Coordinator at the Center for Healthy Aging at 412-383-3121 or visit www.healthyaging.pitt.edu.