



Video games aren't just for kids anymore



That brightly colored, fruitshaped cereal may still be 'just for kids' (maybe always will be), but video games are not. With the introduction of the Nintendo Wii (pronounced "we") video game, there are more and more adults playing video games. A startling number of adults are now becoming active "gamers". While it is understandable that one might have a conflict with calling Grandma a "gamer", that is exactly what she --

and countless other adults have become.

The Wii has taken this generation by storm with games such as WiiSports Bowling, Tennis, and Baseball. Senior living communities all over the country have installed Wii systems and they are a huge hit, turning rooms into baseball diamonds or bowling alleys. Many such communities even have tournaments for their residents. Along with providing entertainment, having Wii systems in public common areas allows residents to socialize with one another, and participate in activities with a variety of other people. Participating in "team" activities can help people work together, create strong relationships, encourage people to socialize, and enable people to keep their minds and bodies fit.

In the past, video games were considered by many people, to be mindless entertainment contributing to the lack of physical activity and obesity as well as laziness. The latest trend is to get people moving, mentally and physically. The Wii allows those who cannot get out onto the tennis court or bowling alley to remain active by using a wireless, motion-sensing remote control. Instead of a typical video game controller with 50 buttons that do not make sense, the Wii controller is modeled after a standard TV remote. There are no tricky button combinations and instantaneous reaction time is not necessary. The controller and menus are easy to navigate and while the games are active, they do not require extreme physical exertion. Instead of having to heave a 15-pound bowling ball down the lane, a simple swing of the arm will send the virtual bowling ball down the alley to the pins. This physical activity that mimics the actual sport can have the same effects as really bowling, golfing or playing tennis. There is a chance, regardless of age, that the next morning you really may feel tired and stiff.

In a recent visit to a retirement home to see my grandmother, I was absolutely shocked to see that instead of the videotape that usually plays during visits, there was a Wii attached to the television, and the residents

were playing a game. One of the resident's grandchildren had brought the Wii in to demonstrate how he played games with his friends. Everyone watched the 12 year old boy play his grandfather in a Wii Tennis match and guess who was winning? The residents were thoroughly intrigued with the game and were quickly lining up to play. After the boy's grandfather got into the game, the other residents realized that this was something they could definitely participate in, without having to worry about overexerting themselves. They soon switched to bowling, which was an even bigger hit than the tennis. I briefly entertained the idea of joining in the game, and then thought better of myself — most of the residents had higher bowling scores than I could ever dream of having. When was the last time you had a score of 130?

The Wii is far from becoming a household staple like the toaster, but it is slowly becoming more and more popular. It is obvious that Nintendo did not plan for the Wii to be so popular with older generations, but they are pleased all the same that it has caught on. They have since created other games including brain training games, vision training games, along with many Nintendo classics to please kids, teens, and adults. Skeptics beware, video games have been revolutionized from being nothing more than shoot-'em-up violence (although these games still exist) to an interactive and interesting games that literally everyone can play. So for the next big family holiday, get out the Wii and see just how much fun your whole family can have together, just don't be ashamed when Grandma beats you at bowling.

Remember: Check with your Doctor before you begin an exercise program.

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