

Senior Sense



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Your Health

Strength –Building Exercise

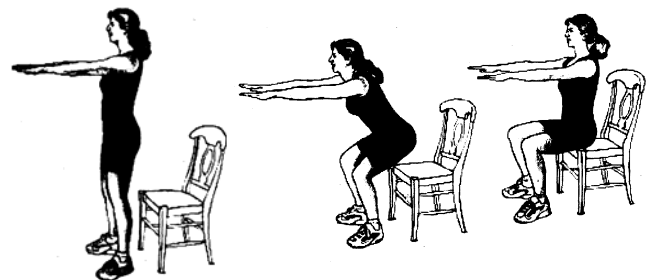
Here are two simple exercises to build your strength slowly and gently. You do not need any equipment except a sturdy chair and a wall. For these exercises, you will use only your own body weight. Do these exercises at 2-3 times a week. In the next issue of *Senior Sense*, we will add more exercises. If you want to go faster, you can get the all the exercises on-line at: http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/growing_stronger/print_friendly_pdf.htm or you can buy the book by Dr. Miriam Nelson called *Strong Women Stay Young*. Do not be put off by that title if you are a man. The exercises work for both men and women.

Before you begin any strength training, warm up by walking for five minutes. Warm muscles are more flexible and less likely to be injured. Always keep breathing while you exercise and do a full range of motion. Then be sure to stretch once you finish.

Squats

This exercise is great for hips, thighs and buttocks.

1. Stand in front of the chair. Feet are a little wider than your shoulders. Extend your arms straight out.
2. Keeping your feet flat, bend your knees as you lower your bottom down onto the chair. Go slow and controlled while you count to 4.
3. Pause. Then slowly stand as you count to 2. Keep your knees over your ankles and your back straight.
4. Repeat 10 times to do one set. Rest 1 minute and then do ten more squats.



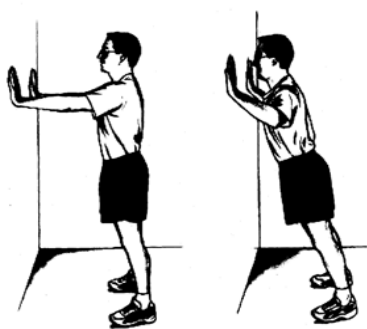
Tip: Use your hands for support if needed.

1. If you cannot sit all the way down or feel pain or discomfort, place 1-2 pillows on the chair and squat down 4-6 inches.
2. Protect your knees. Never allow your knees to come forward past your toes.

Wall Push-Ups

This exercise strengthens your arms, shoulders and chest.

1. Stand about arm's length from a wall. Face the wall and lean your body forward. Place your palms flat on the wall at shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.
2. Bend your elbows as you lower your body toward the wall. Go slowly and controlled for a count of 4. Keep your feet planted.
3. Pause. Then slowly push back out until your arms are straight as you count to 4. Don't lock your elbows. Repeat 10 times for 1 set. Rest one minute and do 10 more.



Tip: Keep hands planted on the wall. Don't arch or round your back.

Your Relationships

“I Just Don't Remember Things Like I Used To”

Pamela and Michael have been married 62 years and have enjoyed a wonderful life together. Michael was a history teacher and could recite all kinds of fascinating facts from the past. Pamela has become concerned recently, however, as Michael seems to forget everyday tasks and appointments. They are both frustrated with this situation.

One of the most difficult challenges for many senior caregivers is dealing with

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cognitive impairments – both their own and their loved one's. Cognitive and memory impairments are

defined as the loss of a person's ability to process, learn, and remember information. These losses are usually gradual and are typical of normal aging, to some degree. Serious memory problems can indicate more serious issues, however. Caring for your loved one with serious cognitive problems can be challenging because he may require special care such as 24-hour supervision, specialized communication techniques, management of odd behaviors, and help with activities of daily living (ADL's). Caregivers often experience enormous stress from caring for a loved

one with serious cognitive impairments.

Here are some steps for helping you care for a loved one suffering from cognitive and memory impairments.

Step 1. Get a medical diagnosis and care assessment. To accurately understand your loved one's mental and physical health, start with a complete medical assessment and diagnosis. Your regular doctor may be able to refer you to a specialist in senior care called a geriatrician. Memory impairments are sometimes due to correctable conditions such as not drinking enough water. A geriatrician should be able to pinpoint possible causes and recommend treatment options. This diagnosis will be the groundwork for planning the kinds of care that may be needed going forward. Some hospitals, Area Agencies on Aging (AAA's), caregiver resource centers, or other government or private organizations also offer geriatric needs assessments.

Step 2. Educate yourself, your loved one, and your family.

Once you have a diagnosis, begin collecting information about the memory condition, the level of care needed, and available resources in your community. Health and social service professionals can be a valuable source of information. Online resources such as www.caregiver.org and www.aoa.gov can also be useful. It is good idea to keep a notebook

or file folder of information you collect. Knowledge will bolster your confidence and will reduce your anxiety about caregiving. Share what you learn with your loved one and other family members.

Step 3. Outline a care plan. With the diagnosis and care assessment, make plans to provide the best care for your loved one and for yourself. Consider both short- and long-term needs in the caregiving plan because your loved one's needs will likely change over time. To develop a plan, acknowledge those things that you are willing and capable of doing and recognize who might be able to provide you with support and assistance. Set a time frame for planned action or activities, and have a back-up plan for unanticipated changes such as a loss of income or new limitations on mobility. A geriatric care manager or specialized social worker can be helpful in this planning.

Clear and legally binding documents help ensure that your loved one's wishes will be fulfilled. Legal documents can also authorize you or others to make legal, financial and health care decisions.

Step 4. Look at your finances. A full understanding of financial assets and liabilities is key in care planning. You may want to get professional assistance from an elder law attorney or financial planner. In

most cases, try to include your loved one and other family members in this process. Compile a list of financial assets and liabilities, such as checking/saving accounts, Social Security income, certificates of deposit, stocks/bonds, real estate deeds, insurance policies/annuities,

retirement or pension benefits, credit card debts, and home mortgages/loans, and keep them updated. Keep a record of the dates of money coming in and the due dates for bills. There are computer programs to manage all this electronically.

Step 5. Review legal documents.

Clear and legally binding documents help ensure that your loved one's wishes will be fulfilled. Legal documents can also authorize you or others to make legal, financial and health care decisions. You may need to determine your eligibility for public programs such as Medicaid. You can get information about low-cost legal services through an elder law specialist or the Area Agency on Aging in your community.

Step 6. Connect with others.

Joining a support group is a good chance for meeting other caregivers facing similar circumstances. These groups understand your challenges and can help with practical information and advice about local resources. Support groups will be a safe and confidential place to share negative feelings, to share ideas and information, and to learn new caregiving strategies. If you can't get away from the house, you can often find online support groups.

Step 7. Take care of yourself. This is very important, but also often overlooked. Caregivers are at high risk for poor physical and emotional

health themselves, which their your ability to care for others. The same fitness habits you've always known apply now as well: practice regular exercise, eat nutritious meals and snacks, get adequate sleep, get regular medical check-ups, and take time for yourself.

Seeing and caring for your loved one's memory or personality change due to cognitive impairments can be depressing and frustrating. Remember that the cognitive impairments are not your loved one's fault. Be forgiving of the mistakes she may make, and be sure to forgive yourself for the times you are less than perfect in your own reactions.

Adapted from Caregiving – A Universal Occupation, National Center on Caregiving, 2004.

Your Resources

Clearing Clutter

Everyone has at least one drawer, closet, room, attic, basement, or storage shed that is just out of control. You may have several of these places piled high and deep with various and sundry stuff. In

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your heart you know you need to get rid of most of it, but your head knows how much work going through all that stuff is going to be. So it sits. And

when that space gets filled up, a new one is

set aside to collect still more stuff.

Some folks will wait until they move to deal with all this stuff. That may work for you if you move every two or three years. If not, you probably need a plan to make sure useless clutter gets dealt with. If you have lived in the same place for decades, you may need to hire reinforcements to help you.

Select the most realistic approach. Are you more likely to deal with your stuff a little bit at a time? Or is it more likely to get done with a team of friends and family members recruited for the weekend? It may be worth paying someone by the hour. Depending on your stuff, you might also agree to share in the proceeds from a yard, garage, or online sale. Most of the time, unless you are really rich and/or popular, the nature of accumulated stuff is such that you really need to do it yourself.

Break big tasks into small ones. Instead of tackling your entire house, pick one room or one closet to focus on at a time. This is the kind of work that has a way of expanding, so make sure to set clear goals for what you want to accomplish in the time available. If your goal is getting the bathroom closet organized, do not spend your time scrubbing the shower stall.

Sort to kill. Be brutal about it. If you have not unpacked the box the last three times you moved, there is a good chance you really do not need whatever it contains. Toss or recycle, sell or donate, and keep. Those are your choices. Notice there is no I-would-use-this-if-I-got-it-fixed stack, or keep-in-case-leisure-suits-ever-come-back-in-style pile.

Selling used to mean having a yard or garage sale. Today you have more options. Flea markets can be an effective way to sell household items and collectibles. Second-hand and vintage stores might offer the best outlet for quality older clothing and personal items. Online options range from auction houses to collectors and everything in between. Online options are especially useful for items that may not sell well at a yard sale, like music CDs, albums and tapes or books.

Getting on top of the clutter is one of those jobs that often seems worse than it actually is. Even if it is a lot of work, knowing you have dealt with all your stuff and now have things organized the way you want makes it well worth the effort.



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Dear Friend:

SENIOR SENSE is a quarterly publication provided by your local county Cooperative Extension office. It is prepared by Extension Family & Consumer Sciences specialists at The University of Georgia specifically for the educational needs of older Georgians.

Please contact your local Cooperative Extension office for more information on these and related topics.

Learning *for* **Life**

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