

The Essential 4: **4 Age Defying Fitness** **Exercises For The** **Body**

First Edition

A [Fountain Of Youth](http://www.Fountain-Of-Youth.net) Publication

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Introduction

How Exercising Can Reverse the Aging Clock

Each year, Americans spend more than fifty billion dollars in an attempt to regain their youthful appearance. From plastic surgery and implants, to Botox and collagen injections, the anti-aging industry is booming with no signs of slowing down.

Before you rush out and undergo expensive and dangerous surgical procedures or inject toxins into your body, consider embarking on the tried and true anti-aging remedy -- good old fashioned exercise.

Believe it or not, exercising for just 30 minutes each day can turn back the aging clock and provide you with enough energy to get you through the day. A brisk walk in the morning can help you jumpstart your day, while an evening walk can help clear your head and achieve a restful night of sleep.

Scientific studies conducted at the National Institute on Aging have shown that regular exercise can help prevent or delay some diseases and disabilities caused by aging. These studies have also shown that regular exercise can improve the health of people who already suffer from these diseases and disabilities.

If it's been awhile since you've gotten up from the sofa, you'll want to start out slowly and build your endurance. Marathon runners don't just get up one day and decide to run 26 miles. They train and build their muscles over an extended period of time. You're in a marathon too -- the marathon of life!

The first thing you will want to do is perform stretching exercises to warm and stretch your muscles. Stretching exercises are easy to perform and

involve raising your arms over your head and behind your back, or sitting on the floor to stretch your leg muscles. You can easily find a variety of stretching exercises by conducting research via the Internet or visiting your local library and checking out a few exercise books.

You should stretch your body muscles for at least 10 minutes before embarking on any exercise, and for an additional 10 minutes after you exercise. Stretching after your workout helps to cool your muscles down and prevents cramping.

There are four types of exercise methods: endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility.

Endurance exercises increase heart and respiratory rate and include walking, jogging, running, biking, dancing, skating, etc. When performed on a regular basis, endurance exercises improve the health of the lungs, heart, and blood vessels. Research shows endurance exercises can delay or prevent diabetes, heart disease, stroke and certain cancers.

Strength exercises build muscle mass and can help strengthen muscles in the chest, triceps, shoulders, abdomen, biceps, back, and legs. You don't need fancy equipment to perform strength exercises. Believe it or not, you can gain strength in your arms by lifting a can of soup. You can find a variety of strength exercises by conducting research via the Internet.

Balance exercises can help you stay steady on your feet and avoid falling. Each year, more than 300,000 people are admitted to the hospital for hip fractures caused by falling. Performing balance exercises on a regular basis can help you from becoming a victim of an accidental fall.

When starting out, use a chair to help retain your balance. Simply hold onto the back of a chair as you lift one leg off the ground. As you progress, use just one finger to help you maintain your balance. If you perform these

exercises regularly, you should be able to stand on one leg without the need for a chair, within 30 to 90 days.

Flexibility exercises can help keep your body flexible and avoid injuries that involve the back, neck, groin, hip, knee, calf, shoulder, and hamstring muscles. Similar to stretching exercises, flexibility exercises involve sitting or standing while stretching and holding the pose for 5 to 10 seconds or more.

Exercise is a free and effective way to reverse the aging clock. It can be performed at home, while on vacation, at the office, and even while standing in line at the grocery store. Sure, you might look a little funny performing knee bends in the grocery line, but who cares? You'll be energetic, strong and radiant, and you won't have to spend a penny to get that way!

1. Simple Balance Exercises

Balance exercises can help you stay steady on your feet and avoid falling. Each year, more than 300,000 people are admitted to the hospital for hip fractures caused by falling. Performing balance exercises on a regular basis can help you avoid becoming a victim of an accidental fall.

When starting out, use a chair or countertop to help retain your balance. Simply hold onto the back of a chair or countertop with your fingertips. Lift one leg off the ground and maintain your balance while standing on one leg. Hold for ten seconds, than repeat with the other leg. Perform this exercise five times.

As you progress, use just one fingertip to help you maintain your balance. If you perform these exercises regularly, you should be able to stand on one leg without the need for a chair or countertop within 30 to 90 days.

Once you become steady on your feet and are able to conduct the above exercise without using a chair or countertop, you can increase the difficulty by closing your eyes. The first few times you attempt this exercise, you might want to consider having someone stand close by in case you lose your balance.

Yoga and Tai Chi are excellent balance exercises. These types of classes are oftentimes offered in local YMCA and YWCA facilities, gyms, and private yoga or tai chi facilities. Most cities and towns across America have a yoga studio within driving distance.

While many people equate yoga to being tied up like a pretzel, there are many styles and variations of yoga. If you don't have access to a local yoga studio, there are literally hundreds of videos and DVDs that allow you to perform yoga and tai chi in the comfort of your home.

If you have Internet access, you can access many free yoga and tai chi instructional videos. Simply type in 'free yoga video' or 'free tai chi video' at your favorite search engine. Another place to locate yoga and tai chi instructional videos is YouTube.com.

Exercise balls are a fun and relatively easy way to regain or maintain balance. These balls have been used in physical therapy settings for more than 25 years. They were introduced to the general public in the early 90s and have become a household name in the last five years.

In order to obtain maximum benefit from exercise balls, it's best to work with a qualified exercise coach or physical therapist. Exercise balls can be a bit tricky in the beginning, but once you master them they can provide significant health benefits.

If you are unable to locate a qualified exercise coach or physical therapist, there are several exercise ball videos and DVDs which can be purchased

online, at exercise retail stores, or in some major retail outlets such as Walmart and Target.

If you live in an apartment or condo and have concrete parking stops located in the parking lot, consider using them as a balance beam. It's best to bring a buddy along as a spotter, in case you lose your balance.

Last, but not least, the tried and true sobriety test is a great way to improve your balance. Simply place one foot directly in front of the other and walk a straight line.

2. Simple Endurance Exercises

Endurance exercises increase heart and respiratory rate. Some of the most popular endurance exercise routines include walking, jogging, running, biking, dancing, skating, etc. When performed on a regular basis, endurance exercises improve the health of the lungs, heart, and blood vessels.

Studies conducted at the National Institute on Aging show endurance exercises can delay or prevent diabetes, heart disease, stroke and certain cancers. Exercise of any type can lead to increased energy, clearer thinking, and improved attitude. Endurance exercises give you the 'umph' to get through the day.

Endurance exercises are also referred to as cardio exercises. If you have been inactive for an extended period of time, you will need to start your exercise program slowly and build endurance gradually. It may take several months to build up the strength required to do a complete endurance workout.

Start with as little as five minutes of endurance exercises in the beginning. As your endurance improves, increase the time. Work toward the goal of engaging in endurance exercises for a minimum of 30 minutes per day.

One of the easiest forms of endurance exercises involves walking. It doesn't cost a dime, but provides an abundance of health benefits. Taking a brisk walk in the morning is an excellent way to start your day. It's also a great way to release the stress at the end of the day, and can provide you with a restful night of sleep.

If you are unable to walk in your neighborhood, or because of inclement weather, a treadmill is a good option. Oftentimes, you can find a used treadmill in the Classifieds section of your local newspaper. Some pawn shops sell exercise equipment at exceptionally low prices. Used treadmills can frequently be found at yard sales.

It's a good idea to conduct research prior to purchasing any treadmill. Educate yourself about the different types of treadmills, what to look out for, what brands to avoid, etc. While a cheap treadmill may seem like a good deal at the time, if it doesn't provide a comfortable walking experience, chances are you won't use it more than once or twice.

When you embark on an endurance exercise program, establish a goal and make a plan. People walk for various reasons. Some use walking as a way to reduce or eliminate stress. Others walk as part of a weight loss or health program. Think about where you would like to see yourself in the next 30, 60 or 90 days. Would you like to be able to walk a block, a mile, or a marathon? Whatever you set out to accomplish, you can achieve it.

It's a good idea to walk with a buddy. Not only are you safer in numbers, it's fun to take a brisk stroll with a friend or neighbor who has similar goals as your own. A buddy can help you stay motivated and vice versa.

If you walk during evening hours, be certain to wear light-colored or reflective clothing. There are many safety clothing items including vests, arm bands, and hats.

To reduce the risk of injury, wear proper walking shoes and take an extra pair to work. Whenever walking opportunities arise, you'll be prepared to take advantage of them!

If you're going on an extended walk, or will be walking in a hot climate, be certain to take an adequate supply of water with you.

Last, but not least, learn how to walk properly. Keep your chin up and shoulders back. You want the heel of your foot to touch the ground last, then roll your weight forward as you push off from your toes. You can increase the intensity this endurance exercise by swinging your arms as you walk.

In order to obtain maximum benefit from this simple endurance exercise, think of it as having three parts. The first part should consist of five minutes of slow walking. The second part should consist of five minutes of increased pace. You can walk faster, walk up a hill, or use the incline setting on the treadmill. The third part involves decreasing the pace and cooling down the muscles for five minutes.

As you build your endurance, you can increase the second part and walk at the increased pace for up to 20 minutes. Always be certain to warm up and cool down to avoid potential strains or sprains from overworked muscles.

3. Simple Strength Exercises

Strength exercises build muscle mass and can help strengthen muscles in the chest, triceps, shoulders, abdomen, biceps, back, and legs. You don't need fancy equipment to perform strength exercises. Believe it or not, you can gain strength in your arms by lifting a can of soup.

It doesn't require nearly as much effort to build stronger muscles as many people are led to believe. Oftentimes, people equate strength exercises to going to the gym and lifting heavy barbells. Unless you are training to become a bodybuilder, nothing could be further from the truth.

Small changes in muscle size can make a significant difference in strength, particularly in people who experience muscle wasting due to aging or health problems. You don't have to make a muscle the size of Popeye's in order to regain strength in your arms. You might just need a pea sized increase to improve your ability to do things like get up from a chair or climb stairs.

Many people are unaware of the fact that your muscles remain active even while you are sleeping. This activity is known as metabolism and it burns up calories. Not only do strength exercises build muscle strength, they can also help you maintain or lose weight.

To conduct strength exercises you will need a set of weights. There are many types of weights available including hand and ankle weights. You can make your own weights by using a soup can, empty plastic milk jug filled with water, or socks filled with beans and tied shut at the ends. Additionally, you can use a resistance band, which looks like a giant rubber band.

It is recommended to engage in strength exercises for all major muscle groups a minimum of twice a week. If you have been inactive for an extended period of time, start out slowly and use one or two pound weights. If you start out with weights that are too heavy, you can tear your muscles, so it's very important to start off slow and build your strength.

When the strength exercises become too easy, it's time to up the weights or resistance. You should strive to always increase your weight on a weekly basis. This may involve adding one pound or more per week. Depending on your physical abilities, it may take three or four weeks

before you are able to add additional weight. Take it slow and build up your strength.

When performing strength exercises, experts suggest doing between 8 and 15 repetitions. Wait one minute, then perform another set of 8 to 15 repetitions. Do this up to ten times.

When lifting weights, you should count to three as you lift or push the weight. Hold the position for one second, then take another three seconds to lower the weight. Never allow the weight to drop, as this could result in injury.

If you are unable to lift or push a weight eight times in a row, it's too heavy for you. If you can lift or push a weight more than fifteen times in a row, it's too light for you.

4. Simple Stretching Exercises

Have you ever watched a cat stretch and arch their back up? If so, you probably marveled at their flexibility and wished your body could move that easily. While you may never become as flexible as a cat, incorporating simple stretching exercises into your daily routine can provide many benefits.

One of the best things you can do for yourself is start your morning off with simple stretching exercises. Before you ever get out of bed, begin the stretching process. Raise your arms over your head. Stretch your legs out and point your toes.

Next, sit on the side of your bed. Place your feet on the floor. Lift the heel of one foot, and balancing the weight of the foot on the toes, stretch the arches of your feet. Your feet carry the weight of your entire body and are frequently neglected. Take a few minutes to stretch those puppies out

before you begin your day. Repeat this exercise ten times for each foot. You can do these exercises one foot at a time, or exercise both feet together.

Still sitting on the side of your bed, bend over and stretch your hands toward your feet. Arch your back and hold for a count of ten. Repeat five times.

Next, focus on stretching your neck. Slowly rotate your neck in a circle and touch your ears to your shoulders. Then slowly rotate clockwise five times and counter clockwise five times. This feels so good that you might want to do it ten times. Just be careful to not stretch too far.

Move down to your shoulders. Most people carry a great deal of stress in the neck, shoulders and back, so it's important to stretch these muscles out each and every morning. Shrug your shoulders up to your ears ten times. Release the tension in the area where the neck and back connect by holding each shrug for a count of five. Repeat ten times.

Now's it time to rise from the bedside and stretch your arms. Stand next to your bed. Intertwine your fingers and raise your hands above your head with the palms facing upwards. Stretch your arms as far as possible, stretching the rib cage. Hold for a count of ten and repeat five times. When holding for a count, remember to breathe. Take a deep breath in through your nose and blow out through your mouth.

Next, you're going to bend over and touch your fingers to your toes while keeping your knees straight. If you are unable to touch your toes in the beginning, do the best you can. You will be able to stretch further and further each day, IF you perform these exercises on a daily basis. Hold each stretch for a count of ten and repeat five times.

Many people claim they do not have time to perform exercises in the morning. These simple stretching exercises can be performed in less than

ten minutes. Performing them can lead to more energy, clearer thinking, improved attitude, and reduce the risk of injury. Don't you owe your hard working body ten minutes to prepare for the day?

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The End