



THE FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EXERCISE AND DIET AFTER 40

When there's more to life than how good you look but you still want to look good!

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1. **Warm-up, mobilise and stretch:** Spending 10 to 15 minutes daily on mobility and flexibility will pay huge dividends when it comes to staying healthy as you age.
2. **Train with intensity:** Low reps on heavyweight will pay greater dividends than light weight and high reps and also produce less muscle soreness when you first start, these are all incredibly important for muscle growth and protection against muscle loss.
3. **Get enough rest:** Recovery is key to building muscle and avoiding injury. Make sure you get enough sleep and take rest days. As you age recovery takes longer, so avoid training on consecutive days where possible. 3 times a week works well when combined with a good diet.
4. **Eat a balanced diet:** Eating a balanced diet with enough protein, vegetables, carbohydrates, and healthy fats is essential for building muscle and staying healthy.
5. **Stay hydrated:** Drinking enough water is important for keeping muscle mass and preventing dehydration. 2 Litres is a good starting point but add extra on training days. It doesn't all need to be straight water most fluids hydrate, but 1 or 2 glasses of the clear stuff won't hurt you.

If in doubt seek out professional help.

Warm up, mobilise and stretch

Stretching for the sake of stretching is not always effective or useful. It's always worth having a movement assessment before you begin your fitness journey, and then periodically as you go. Often the muscles that feel the tightest are the ones constantly being stretched, so their opposing muscles may be the ones that need to be lengthened.

On training days start with a set or two of body weight squats this will let you know how your body feels. Then mobilise rather than stretching the areas of concern.

Common mobility issues include:

Calf stiffness: - Hold the bottom of your squat the one at a time, while keeping your feet flat on the floor, push the knee forward over the toes, then side to side.

Knee discomfort: - Raise your foot up to your buttocks and hold for 5 – 10 seconds.

Front hip pinch: - As for knee pain but squeeze your buttocks tight while doing it.

Other hip pains: - Open and close the gate. To **open the gate**, raise the knee above hip height and then rotate it outwards and back down and repeat 5 – 10 times. Then repeat the opposite way to **close the gate**.

Spine stiffness: - 'T' stretch, Lie on your back with arms out to the side. Raise one leg as high as possible then keeping your shoulders on the floor twist your hips to bring your raised foot across the body towards the floor on the opposite side. Pops and cracks coming from the back while doing this are normally a good thing.

Shoulder stiffness: - Cuff rotator test, place the hand of the affected shoulder on the opposite shoulder. Raise the elbow forward and up. If you experience pain, you have a cuff rotator injury. See a **qualified** sports injury therapist or physiotherapist. Avoid pressing exercises until pain-free. No pain continues to mobilise with circular shrugs and internal and external arm rotations.

Chest stiffness: - Fling your arm back with thumbs leading the way. Repeat 3 – 5 times at different heights.

On none training days, foam roll all areas especially those feeling tight. Hold on painful areas for up to 30 seconds. If you have been assessed and have known tight muscles hold developmental stretches on them for 20 – 30 seconds and repeat up to 3 times. As mentioned, if you have not been assessed just foam roll, do not do developmental stretches until you have.

Train with intensity

Intensity is relative! I don't expect a deconditioned 70-year-old to be squatting 220 Lbs (180 Kg). But once you can squat 3 sets of 5 reps on body weight to thighs parallel to the floor you need to start loading your squat with some kind of resistance. The bar is ideal for most as it can be incrementally loaded, and the back squat recruits the most muscle. If that's not possible there are many options such as bags, bands or dumbbells.

Big muscles are probably not the goal once you pass 40, though they're nice to have. Strength should be the priority now, studies show the stronger you are in the second half of life the longer and better quality of life you are likely to have. A good-looking physique is a byproduct of this.

The good news is that intense training doesn't need to be done as often as less intense training. So, 3 short sessions a week should be plenty, giving you time to fit in and enjoy the rest of your now high-quality life.

You will feel some post-exercise soreness when you start and from time to time but this is far less with low reps than it would be with high.

Get enough rest

Our body doesn't improve by training it, it gets weaker! Our body improves when we allow time for the body to recover from the training. The aim should be to use the minimum effective dose of training to stimulate a recovery response and then fuel the recovery with good nutrition and REST.

For ruffly 24 hours after training hard we are significantly weaker. So, training the next day will make us weaker still. Yes, split routines can help with this, but they aren't the most effective way. If you do squats for your leg day you are also working the posterior core hard so back work the next day would be affected. If you do bench on the following day shoulders and triceps are affected. So now we need to do back which affects the biceps and lower back depending on exercise choice. Then start again after a day off. Or you could do Squats, Bench/Press and Deadlift/Chins every other day and work everything 3 times a week.

If that seems too little you may be in for a surprise! As we age, we need MORE not LESS recovery time. For those over 60, you will probably find twice a week MORE productive than three times a week, as it lets you recover more completely. And over 70 that may just be once a week depending on your physical state and training history.

Active recovery can help. Do not think you have to stay in bed all day to recover, exercise is a supplement to daily activity or a replacement. Still do the things that you want/need to do on recovery days. As mentioned in the section on stretching, the use of the foam roller can be a good way to keep supple and speed recovery. Also, if you wanted you could try Yoga or meditation classes. Even just going for a short walk around the park can prove beneficial, not just physically but mentally too.

Eat a balanced diet

When it comes to weight management diet is the key. But first set up a baseline. Don't rush to change what you eat at the same time as changing exercise habits, you'll find it all too hard to stick to.

Instead, use the first two weeks to establish what needs to change. Has your increase in exercise caused you to start losing or gaining weight?

If you're gaining 1 lb of unwanted fat, then you need to reduce your intake of food by about 500 Kcal to maintain 1,000 to lose it again.

If your weight stays constant, then you need to only drop 500 Kcal to lose weight.

And, if it is going down by 1 Lb then don't reduce calories again until it stops! If you want to gain muscle at strength, then an increase of up to 1000 Kcal may be called for.

Remember 1 Lb of fat is equal to 3,500 Kcal,

To lose a Lb a week reduce 500Kcal/day (from maintenance intake)

To increase 1 Lb a week, increase by 500Kcal/day

With health nutrients are your key. The easiest way to get these is whole foods. Start by improving your protein intake. Most older adults tend to reduce these first whether due to cost or convenience, but protein is vital in keeping muscles, balancing hormones and a strong immune system.

Aim for one palm-sized serving of high-protein food per meal for women and two for men.

After protein, take a look at vegetables. Go colourful with these as more variation in colour means more variation in nutrients.

Aim for a minimum of one fist-size serving of colourful vegetables per meal for women and two for men.

Now we move to fats. They are not the villain they were made out to be when we were kids but focus on the good ones. Omega 3 & 6 must be eaten as our body cannot produce its own. The body has preferred forms for Omega 3 those being DHA and EPA. As a rule of thumb, DHA helps the brain and EPA helps the body, but they have many other functions too. We can also get Omega 3 from walnuts although this is in the form of ALA a lesser cog in the Omega 3 chain, so vegans may prefer to use Krill oil to supplement. Omega 6 is normally abundant in most people's diets so unless you go overboard on omega 3 supplementation, you'll probably be fine.

Aim for one thumb-size serving of healthy fatty food per meal for women and two for men.

Last for now is your sugary or starchy foods. Use these to manipulate your calorie intake first. Ideally, eat them around exercise, to supply fuel and aid recovery.

Stay hydrated

Water is the key to life, but it's in everything so don't obsess too much.

2 Litres or 8 8oz glasses a day of liquid a day is a great base. Ideally one or two of those glasses should be straight water, but it's not the end of the world.

If you're exercising for an hour or more add a glass or two.

If it's hot add a glass or two.

If it's extremely cold ADD a glass.

If your lips feel dry add a glass.

If you feel thirsty add two to three glasses, you are already over 4% dehydrated!

You will need to pee more, but it will be worth it.

Nutritional habits are included in all my face-to-face and online coaching programmes. To learn more about nutrition and/or exercise for older adults visit my website at www.activenrg.co.uk or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ACTIVENRG/>