



What kinds of exercises should women 60 or over perform that have a history of hip problems, yet want to lose some weight and get fit?

Mary, Albuquerque, NM

After receiving clearance from your primary care provider (PCP) to begin exercise the next step is to find fitness professionals with the ability and experience to design a program with your history of hip problems, be it arthritis or hip replacement in mind. Since the hips are the center of strength and balance in the body I recommend you start with someone experienced in bodyweight training.

The ideal programs for individuals 60 and over include exercises that incorporate full range of motion movement (ROMM), strength and balance as a focus, sometimes referred to as sensory-motor training. Although weight machines have a place in the fitness industry they are not typically designed to allow for complete and full range of motion during exercise. Once you experience improved mobility and flexibility you can increase the intensity of your exercise program. Bodyweight training produces excellent overall benefits in addition to helping you to achieve the fitness you desire.

How do I address chronic low back pain? Earl, Washington, D.C.

To effectively address chronic low back pain start by looking at some of the contributing factors to see if any of these fit for you. Start with excess weight. If we carry more than 20 pounds of extra weight losing the weight is priority one to alleviate low back pain. The body will always

have problems when carrying more weight than it's designed too, and the area we carry the extra weight is the back. The next place to investigate is prolonged sitting. We sit for long hours in our work and this is not likely to change any time soon. However, taking frequent breaks to stand and stretch will increase blood flow to restricted areas affected by prolonged sitting and give the back a break (opps, I mean relief).

If you are not able to leave your desk or take breaks then practice breathing in through your nose into the diaphragm. The diaphragm originates at L4 of the spinal column, the area where we experience back pain the most; breathing in through your nose is a quick way to support posture and relieve back pain associated with slouching or leaning over the computer keyboard. Of all the causes of lower back pain, posture is the easiest to correct. Paying attention to how we routinely stand, sit; make sure our feet face forward in relation to our hips and how we walk should help alleviate most back pain related to posture.

Tight hamstrings are serious contributors to low back pain and the cause of serious injuries for athletes. Piriformis, sciatica, shoulder and neck pain as well as headaches are linked to tight hamstrings. If you have not been successful stretching on your own seek help from fitness and movement professionals, your back will thank you.

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