



Health & Wellness Guide 2025

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The importance of wellness exams after 50

Seniors are a growing and increasingly prosperous demographic. As the senior population increases, a greater emphasis must be placed on keeping aging individuals healthy. Wellness checks are important at any age, but they bear even more significance as individuals grow older.

Age brings with it many things, including experience and wisdom. But age also brings an increased risk for health problems. Aging men and women are vulnerable to chronic conditions like heart disease, COPD, cancer, and arthritis. It's noteworthy that many chronic health conditions fail to produce any symptoms until they have progressed to a point where treatment is difficult.

Annual wellness exams can help older adults take charge of their health and stay as healthy as possible. It's possible for a person to preserve his or her health (and possibly life) through check-ups and easy tests. Here are some common screenings and health recommendations that come up in the prime of one's life.

- **Colorectal cancer screening:** A colon cancer screening is recommended for everyone at age 45. Colon cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States, and risk increases at age 45. Although people seldom look forward to a colonoscopy and the required prep, putting off

this test due to a little discomfort may result in missing colon cancer at its earliest stage when it is most treatable.

- **Cholesterol screening:** This simple blood test can help evaluate the risk for heart disease. High cholesterol can contribute to the buildup of plaque in the arteries, making them narrower and less flexible, according to Sharecare, Inc.

- **Mammogram:** Most health organizations recommend annual mammogram screenings from age 40 until menopause. Then it may be possible to have a mammogram every other year for those who are at average risk. It is important for women to discuss mammogram frequency with their doctors, particularly if there is a family history of breast cancer.

- **Diabetes:** ChenMed says diabetes may be more common in older adults, so regular screenings for this illness can enable early diagnosis and management.

- **Testicular cancer screening:** This test generally is not recommended without symptoms. Some organizations suggest men with a family history or other risk factors consider performing self-examinations.

- **Vaccination needs:** Doctors can alert patients to recommended vaccinations during wellness exams. Seniors should receive an annual flu shot and updated COVID-19 vac-

ination as available. Pneumococcal vaccine can protect against pneumococcal disease that can lead to pneumonia, meningitis and bloodstream infections. Adults over 50 also should receive a vaccination for shingles, which can occur in older age in those who have previously experienced chickenpox.

There are additional advantages to routine health checkups. Doctors can inquire

about fitness routines, stress, sleep, and diet to see if patients are within the guidelines for healthy living.

Older age may make a person wiser, but the risk for various health issues and certain diseases increases with age. Routine health check-ups can keep doctors and patients on the same page.



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Fitness classes for the over-50 crowd

Exercise is a pillar of a healthy lifestyle. When individuals exercise regularly and pair physical activity with a healthy diet and smart lifestyle choices, they can extend their life expectancies and sleep well knowing they're doing everything they can to increase their chances of enjoying a limitless retirement.

Adults over 50 know it's not always so easy to exercise. Hectic schedules can make it seem like there's little time for exercise. And even when adults make time to break a sweat, they might find that traditional workouts combining strength training with cardiovascular exercise are too time-consuming and possibly even a little dull. In such instances, fitness classes can take the place of more traditional exercise regimens. Various classes provide a challenging workout, and many can do so in an hour or less.

- **Pilates:** Improving balance, core strength and flexibility are three goals of Pilates. Pilates has an interesting history, as it was created by Joseph Pilates, a German prisoner of war who was imprisoned off the coast of England during World War I. Pilates and the exercising phenomenon he created ultimately made their way to the United States, where the routine was embraced by dancers looking for a way to aid their injury recovery. Pilates is now part of millions of individuals' exercise regimens. This low-impact exercise is designed to strengthen muscles and improve alignment and flexibility. Achieving greater

balance after 50 pays untold dividends for older adults, who can decrease their risk for falls and fall-related injuries by increasing their steadiness.

- **Spin:** Spin classes are a wildly popular exercise program that utilizes cycling to help people break a sweat. Cardiovascular exercise is beneficial for a number of reasons, including its connection to heart health and even cognitive health. But many people lament daily sessions on a treadmill or elliptical that they find boring. Spin classes involve the use of stationary bikes, but instructors typically guide class members through conditions that mimic outdoor cycling sessions. Resistance and pedaling speed changes throughout a spin class, which serves to keep individuals engaged and burn lots of calories.

- **Kickboxing:** Sometimes referred to as Krav Maga, kickboxing is another unique and challenging class offered at many fitness facilities. Martial arts like kickboxing assist with weight loss and can help people improve their muscle tone, flexibility and stamina. Adults over 50 who are not accustomed to physical activity may find their energy levels are low, but a few kickboxing sessions may produce noticeable differences in stamina. The balance benefits of kickboxing are similar to those provided by Pilates, so this activity may be particularly beneficial for adults over 50 looking to reduce their vulnerability to falls as they grow older.

- **Dance:** Dancing is widely seen as a fun activity, and rightfully so, as few things can be as enjoyable as cutting a rug. But dancing also provides a great cardiovascular workout. Local community centers and even some fitness facilities offer age-specific dancing classes, which the AARP notes are great for individuals who want to build core strength, improve bone health and protect their heart.

Adults over 50 who want to be more physically active can look to any number of fitness classes to break a sweat, build strength and have fun all at once.



Fitness regimens for those 50+

Fitness is an important component of overall wellness. Indeed, staying active has been linked to a number of noteworthy benefits, including decreased disease risk and improved mental health.

Routine exercise helps a person burn calories and maintain a healthy weight. Tufts Medicine says weight gain is common among aging individuals, with both men and women tending to put on weight in their mid-sections. Weight gain is a risk factor for diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Older adults may need to step up their fitness regimens to combat growing waistlines.

Staying active also can help with muscle and bone density, which can decline with age. The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons says exercise is important for maintaining bone strength as the body ages. Strength-training exercises put stress on bones so they can make bones stronger.

Now that it is apparent why fitness is key during senior years, it's time to explore some routines that may be best for people age 50 and older.

Yoga

Yoga is a low-impact practice that improves muscle strength, balance, mobility, and flexibility. All of these factors are important for seniors. For those who find that conventional forms of yoga are too taxing on joints and bones, chair yoga is a lower-impact form of the exercise.

Cycling

Riding a bike is a cardiovascular workout that offers a wide range of benefits. Most people find riding a bike is easy on the joints, and regular cycling can increase muscle strength and enhance flexibility. The pace and intensity of rides can be customized depending on riders' speed and the routes they ride.

Pilates

Joseph Pilates developed an exercise routine that now bears his name in the early twentieth century. Pilates emphasizes core strength and stability, but works all the major muscle groups in the body. Since it is another low-impact exercise, it can be suitable for people with joint issues.

Body weight exercises

As individuals age, they may find that working with dumbbells, barbells or weight equipment at the gym is too taxing. Using body weight to build strength is a low-intensity option. Squats, wall push-ups, chair push-ups, and resistance bands can be used to build strength.

Walking

Walking is an unsung hero in the fitness realm. According to Better Health Channel, just 30 minutes of walking every day can increase cardiovascular fitness, strengthen bones, reduce excess body fat, and boost muscle power and endurance. Walking is low-impact and less taxing on joints than jogging or running.



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3 short-term fitness goals that can lead to long-term success

As New Year's Day 2024 approached, millions of individuals were preparing to make changes they hoped would improve their fitness. In a Forbes Health/One Poll survey of 1,000 adults in the months leading up to the start of 2024, nearly half (48 percent) of respondents indicated improving their physical fitness would be a top priority over the course of the new year.

Fitness-based resolutions are popular every year, but people who aspire to make such changes recognize how difficult it can be to achieve them. In fact, the Forbes Health/One Poll survey found that roughly 44 percent of respondents indicated their resolutions flamed out at the two- or three-month marker. Though there's no one-size-fits-all strategy for sticking with and ultimately achieving a resolution, identifying short-term goals that can help people stay motivated can lead to long-term progress. Individuals who want to improve their physical fitness can consider these three short-term goals and use them as measuring sticks as they pursue more long-term objectives.

1. **Aspire for incremental weight loss.** Weight loss goals were the fourth most popular New Year's resolution for 2024 among participants in the Forbes Health/One Poll survey. Though that survey separated fitness goals from weight loss goals, the two are certainly linked. Individuals who aspire to lose

10 pounds undoubtedly recognize that such a goal cannot be achieved overnight, so why not aspire to lose small amounts of weight at predetermined intervals? For example, if the end goal is losing 10 lbs., aim to lose two pounds by the end of January. Incremental progress can motivate individuals to stay the course and ultimately propel them toward achieving a more substantial, long-term goal.

2. **Exercise for a predetermined number of days each week.** Another way to gradually build toward achieving long-term fitness goals is to establish monthly minimum exercise sessions. Individuals accustomed to a sedentary lifestyle can resolve to exercise three days per week in the first month of their resolution, and then increase that by a day in the second month. A consistent schedule when designing this goal is imperative, which is why it can make more sense to plan for three days per week as opposed to 12 days per month.

3. **Resolve to walk a mile per day.** Walking is an accessible cardiovascular activity that can have a profound effect on overall health. Walking also can help condition sedentary individuals' bodies for more strenuous activity, which is a transition many people aspire to make when setting long-term fitness goals. A daily one-mile walk won't require a significant commitment of time, but it can help acclimate the body to routine exercise. As the effects of

a daily walk begin to take hold, individuals may find it easier to engage in more strenuous physical activities, making this an ideal stepping stone on the way to achieving long-term fitness goals.

Short-term goals can help people remain motivated as they pursue more substantial goals that take longer to achieve. Such an ap-

proach can be especially useful for individuals resolving to improve their physical fitness at the start of a new year.

Individuals who want to improve their physical fitness can consider these three short-term goals and use them as measuring sticks as they pursue more long-term objectives.



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Tips to get children excited about exercise

Human beings need to engage in physical activity to stay healthy. But too many children are not getting the exercise they need. Only 50 percent of boys and less than 34 percent of girls between the ages of 12 and 15 are adequately fit, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Children who are not physically fit are at greater risk for chronic diseases. In addition, children who are overweight or obese are at a higher risk of retaining that extra weight into adulthood.

Getting children to exercise regularly can be an uphill battle with so many distractions, such as electronic devices, vying for their attention. But parents can explore the following ways to get children more excited about physical activity.

- Choose interactive toys. Select toys for kids that require movement. These can include sporting activities, scooters, bicycles, and even video games that involve physical activity. Kids will be moving while they play, which is a first step.
- Set an example. Children may be more likely to embrace physical activity if they see their parents exercising regularly. Adults can share their passions for activities that encourage movement, whether it is hiking, heading to the gym, swimming, or rock scrambling.
- Make it a contest. People can be very competitive, especially young children. If kids know there is a prize or reward attached

to doing something, they may have more motivation to engage with it. Offer a prize to the person who can log the most minutes of physical activity each week.

- Make things social. The more people involved in an activity, the greater the chance kids will want to be involved. Therefore, invite their friends, cousins, classmates, and other relatives to participate.

- Look for new ways to exercise. Plan vacations and day trips around an activity. Perhaps the family can learn how to surf or snorkel on a trip; otherwise, a trip to the zoo or a museum can involve a lot of walking.

- Find reasons to walk. Kids and parents can walk to or from school each day to get exercise. Parking further away from stores ensures some extra steps as well. Take the stairs in malls instead of elevators or escalators.

- Encourage participation in team sports. Afterschool athletics often involve multiple days of practices and games or meets, which can be all the exercise a kid needs to be healthy. Athletics also present a fun way to exercise with friends.

Kids need physical activity to stay healthy, and there are various ways to make them more inclined to be active.

Did you know?

Volunteers typically offer their time and services in an effort to help others, but researchers believe volunteering has a profound effect on individuals who lend a hand, particularly when those pitching in are children and teenagers. A 2023 study published in the journal JAMA Network Open found that volunteering is associated with improved overall health and wellness among children and adolescents. Researchers behind the study found that children who volunteered were 34 percent more likely to be in excellent or very good health compared to peers who did not volunteer. In addition, 66 percent of child and adolescent volunteers were more likely to be seen as “flourishing” and 35 percent were less likely to develop behavioral

problems compared to their peers who did not volunteer. These findings are nothing to scoff at, as mental health issues continue to affect young people at rates that many find alarming. For example, recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates nearly one in three girl high school students considered suicide in 2021. Though additional research into a potential link between volunteering and improved mental health among modern adolescents is necessary, it's worth noting that studies have long since determined that volunteering is good for volunteers' mental health, with volunteers often reporting greater life satisfaction than individuals who do not volunteer.



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How to avoid overdoing it with youth sports participation

Youth sports are wildly popular. According to the Sports & Fitness Industry Association, approximately 61 percent of children between the ages of six and 17 participated in a total team sport at least once per week in 2023.

Participation in sports can pay a number of dividends for children. Youngsters who play sports are physically active, which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has noted can lower risk for disease and decrease the likelihood children are overweight or obese. Sports participation also encourages social interaction, which can help children develop their interpersonal skills and provide opportunities to build lifelong friendships.

With so much to gain from participating in sports, it's no wonder that parents often encourage their children to get involved in local athletic leagues. But it's important that parents recognize how easy it can be to overdo it when it comes to youth sports. Some youth sports leagues now offer travel teams for children as young as six, and such leagues may require kids and their parents to commit several days per week to practice and games. That might be too much for some young athletes, and the following are some strategies parents can employ to ensure their kids are not overdoing it when it comes to sports participation.

- Delay starting children in organized sports. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends waiting until children are fully ready before starting them in organized sports. That time may be different for all kids, even siblings. But the AAP recommends parents wait to enroll children in organized sports until around age six. Free play, which is not governed by rules the ways organized sports are, can be just as effective as team sports at helping children develop their muscles, bones and balance.

- Allow youngsters' ages to guide training time. The AAP suggests a good rule of thumb is that kids should not train more hours each week than their age. Under that guideline, an eight-year-old should not be spending more than eight hours per week practicing and playing a sport.

- Avoid focusing on a single sport. Sports specialization is a term now used to describe intensive training or competition in a single organized sport for more than eight months per year by children who are 12 years old and younger. The AAP advises against sports specialization. According to the sports medicine experts at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, children who specialize in playing one sport early on have an increased risk of overuse injuries, which can develop due to intensive training. Such youngsters also are more likely to experience burnout and stress from playing

the sport. Mixing up sports throughout the year reduces the risk for burnout and overuse injuries, as children likely won't grow bored and will be exercising in unique ways for each sport they play.

- Take time off. Time off is another way to avoid overdoing it with young athletes. The AAP advises young athletes to take at least two to three months off from organized sports participation each year. Time off can be divided into one-month increments.



*Dr. Grady
Hilge*

Audiologist

The Difference Between Hearing Aid Satisfaction and Hearing Aids Sitting in a Drawer

Treating hearing loss used to be simple. The only option for treating hearing loss was to go see an audiologist or a licensed care professional. Today, things have gotten more complicated. There are online retailers, big box stores, and over the counter (OTC) hearing aids you can buy at places like Walgreens or Costco. Seeing a hearing care professional is still the best way to treat hearing loss or get hearing aids and here are a couple reasons why.

Every person has a unique hearing loss just like everyone has their own sense of taste. This means that there should be unique hearing solutions. Hearing aids should be fit, programmed, and supported by experienced hearing professionals. An audiologist is the only person that has the skills to fit and program a hearing aid to your specific hearing and lifestyle needs.

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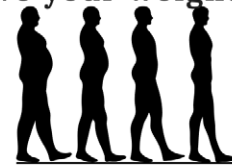
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Popular foods that can compromise heart health

Certain foods have generated devoted followings among people from all walks of life. While flavorful foods can be hard to resist, some wildly popular items found in refrigerators and pantries far and wide could be compromising millions of people's heart health.

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute notes that food and heart health are inextricably linked. Individuals who prioritize including heart-healthy foods in their diets can lower their risk for various cardiovascular diseases, including heart attack and stroke. Those who succumb to the temptation of less heart-healthy foods may pay a considerable price for such indulgences. The World Health Organization reports that cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death across the globe, and poor dietary choices are among the handful of variables contributing to those high mortality rates. While the following popular foods might be delicious and tough to avoid, they also have a reputation for compromising heart health.

- **Bacon:** The sizzling sounds and enticing aromas of bacon, not to mention its flavor profile, make this a hard-to-resist food. However, health care experts note that bacon is high in cholesterol and saturated fat. Saturated fat can be especially bad for heart health, which is one reason why the American Heart Association advises individuals aim for a dietary plan in which less than 6 percent of calories come from saturated fat. That makes bacon a no-go for individuals interested in a heart-healthy diet, as a single slice of uncooked bacon typically contains 110 calories.

- **Red meat:** Red meat is another appetizing but heart-unhealthy food. Like bacon, red meat tends to be high in saturated fat, though that content varies depending on the cut and the type of meat chosen. For example, grass-fed beef contains less saturated fat than grain-fed beef. In addition, cuts that are not considered lean, which include beef short ribs, rib-eye steaks and T-bone steaks, also tend to be higher in saturated fat, and thus less heart-healthy, than leaner cuts like sirloin and extra-lean ground beef.

- **Baked goods:** Baked goods may be irresistible, but that status might change when people recognize that regular consumption of cookies, cakes and muffins has an adverse effect on heart health. WebMD notes that baked goods have been linked to elevated triglyceride levels. That's significant, as the Cleveland Clinic reports that high triglyceride levels in the blood can lead to a condition known as hypertriglyceridemia, which can harm the heart and blood vessels. Eating too many baked goods also can lead to weight gain and potentially overweight or obesity, each of which the AHA identifies as a significant risk factor for heart disease.

- **Processed meats:** Fans of deli meats may insist there's no better midday meal than a sandwich, but their hearts might beg to differ. Processed meats, which include deli meat but also foods such as sausage and hot dogs, contain high amounts of salt and are often loaded with saturated fat. A 2021 study published in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that eating a little more than five ounces of processed meat per week increases a person's risk of cardiovascular disease by 46 percent. Five ounces equates to roughly five slices of deli meat cut 1/8-inch thick.

Certain foods like bacon and red meat are hard to resist. However, those who want to preserve their heart health are advised to eschew these fan favorites and replace them with alternatives that help to lower their risk for cardiovascular disease.



Can certain foods lower cancer risk?

Cancer is a prolific group of diseases that can affect any area of the body. Although many cancers can be successfully treated, cancer avoidance is undeniably preferable. There is no way to completely prevent a cancer diagnosis, but certain foods may help to reduce your risk for the disease.

According to MD Anderson Cancer Center, cancer-fighting foods are plant-based items that are rich in phytochemicals, which also are called phytonutrients. UC Davis Nutrition Department says phytochemicals are bioactive compounds found in vegetables, cereal grains and plant-based beverages like tea. Researchers have found phytochemicals can protect humans from environmental toxins and metabolic processes that can lead to chronic diseases, such as cancer and heart disease. Polyphenols are good examples of phytochemicals.

Health experts recommend packing every meal with healthy and nutritious foods that include plenty of vegetables, whole grains, fruits, and beans. MDACC recommends filling at least two-thirds of a plate with these healthy options. The remaining one-third of the meal should come from lean meat, fish or plant-based proteins and nuts/seeds. It also is important to limit foods that may increase cancer risk, including sugar-sweetened drinks and foods, processed meats, red meat, and alcohol.

When revamping diets to help reduce cancer risk, these heavy hitters should be included:

- Berries
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cauliflower
- Edamame
- Eggs or egg substitute
- Fish
- Green or white tea
- Grapes
- Leafy greens
- Lean chicken
- Lentils and other legumes/beans
- Oatmeal
- Oranges
- Quinoa
- Sweet potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Whole grains, including brown rice

Making smart food choices can keep a person healthy and may reduce the risk of cancer.



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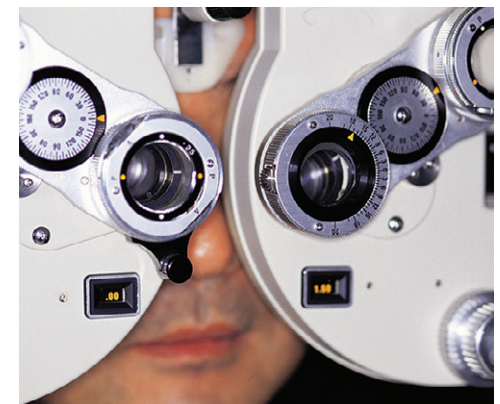
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Glaucoma is an umbrella term used to characterize a group of eye diseases that can gradually diminish individuals' vision and eventually lead to blindness. The National Eye Institute says the symptoms are a result of damage to the optic nerve due to increased intraocular pressure. Treatments designed to reduce eye pressure can help to prevent further damage but will not reverse what already has occurred. Glaucoma can occur at any age, but it is much more common in older adults. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates all people over the age of 60 have a higher risk of developing glaucoma. Glaucoma also is more common among Black people over the age of 40. The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends a more frequent eye exam schedule as individu-

als age to increase chances of early detection. People 65 and older should see an eye professional every two years, if not every year.



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The World Health Organization estimates one in 150 adults are living with bipolar disorder across the globe. That equates to around 40 million people, and while the WHO notes the prevalence of bipolar disorder is approximately equal among men and women, data indicates women are more often diagnosed. Knowledge of bipolar disorder has increased, but one common misconception about the condition continues to prevail. Many individuals equate bipolar disorder with schizophrenia, but McLean Hospital notes that the conditions are two distinct mental health challenges. Bipolar disorder is marked by intense mood swings between deeply depressive states and episodes of mania, while schizophrenia is characterized by psychosis that can include hallucinations, delusions, or disordered thoughts or speech. It's important to note that treatment for bipolar disorder is highly effective, and the WHO notes that individuals who receive such treatment can live productive, meaningful lives.



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Better Health Through Awareness

What distinguishes Pilates from yoga?

People look to a variety of activities to help them achieve their health and wellness goals. Exercise can help people build strength and improve endurance, flexibility, and mindfulness. Some exercises even incorporate a combination of these elements, including yoga and Pilates.

While yoga and Pilates are similar low-impact exercises, they are not exactly the same. One of the ways they differ is that yoga involves achieving a position or pose and holding it. With Pilates, once the pose is reached, the person pushes further to engage the core and challenge the body by moving the arms or legs, advises WebMD. Individuals can explore the differences between Pilates and yoga to figure out which discipline aligns best with their fitness goals.

Pilates

At the end of World War I, Joseph Pilates, who grew up in Dusseldorf, Germany, developed a series of exercises that would ultimately bear his name. As a sickly child suffering from rickets, asthma and rheumatic fever, Pilates aspired to overcome these ailments and devoted his energy to bodybuilding, gymnastics and other physical pursuits. While interned at a camp during the war, Pilates developed and taught a physical fitness program influenced by yoga and the movement of animals. He also built apparatuses to aid in the rehabilitation of soldiers and prisoners of war. According to Pilates Anytime, some believe the iron bed frames and coiled mattress springs in these camps became the inspiration for the Pilates Reformer, which is a device used in Pilates studios.

Pilates is a low-impact exercise that focuses on building core strength, which is achieved through different movements on a reformer machine or a mat. These moves require stabilizing the back and core before going through various range-of-motion exercises. The exercises rely on a person's own body weight to provide resistance.

Yoga

The origins of yoga can be traced to thousands of years ago in India. Yoga is first mentioned in ancient Hindu scriptures, says Healthline. Although it is an exercise, yoga also is an ancient spiritual practice that blends physical poses with breathing techniques. WebMD says yoga is sometimes called "meditative movement," because it features elements of mindfulness. Yoga can have a slow pace suited for beginners, but some variations are faster and more complex. Yoga may help to improve balance, enhance calm and ease stress-related illnesses, and it also promotes flexibility.

Both yoga and Pilates can lead to improved stamina, strength and flexibility, and these exercises do not necessarily require any special equipment. However, yoga may stand alone from Pilates in that it also incorporates meditation and spirituality. Pilates may be more active than yoga, but both exercises are difficult in their own right. However, some people find it is easier for beginners to start with yoga and then branch out to Pilates. Regardless of the approach an individual ultimately takes, both exercises can be excellent ways for people to improve physical health.



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