

Bridging generations

A well-chosen partner or partners, such as grandchildren, can make exercise fun, honest!

The trouble with exercise is that it often feels like a chore. It becomes dull, tedious and simply another thing to be ticked off the mental list of things to do, so eventually we stop. Just how long can you keep doing something that you loathe?

The secret to any successful, regular exercise programme is to keep it interesting, varied, stimulating and enjoyable. One way to achieve this is by exercising with others. The social element is a powerful and significant motivator when it comes to exercising – the fact is that if you exercise with members of your family, friends, neighbours, or work colleagues, you are more likely to maintain an exercise regime.

Usually, when people think of family members they tend to think of spouses and partners, or maybe siblings, but there are other members of your family that will help you develop a regular exercise habit that is varied, full of surprises and will keep you engaged for hours – grandchildren.

the action GAP

Just as the relationship between parents and their children is unique, the connection between grandparents and grandchildren is special. It is full of opportunities to spend time together enjoying new experiences – and an important element of these times is being physically active together. Grandchildren love movement and are bundles of energy that need direction, guidance and help in exploring and learning about the world they inhabit. Grandparents are a crucial part of this. How many of us can still recall something our grandparents did or said?

Of course there are special treats to be active with: days at the seaside, on picnics, collecting blackberries, or holidays. In daily contact there are also countless opportunities for you to be active with your grandchildren. A trip to the local swimming baths during the family sessions, walking grandchildren to school, or simply playing at the local park are times to treasure and will also help you stay active. If you have a garden, showing children how to look after their own plot is another great way for you both to be involved in physical activity regularly.

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It's not all about leaving the house either, playing with toy cars or dolls on the floor can improve flexibility very quickly. Dancing to your old records will always create laughter and sweat – especially if your grandchild is perched on your feet. Simple games, such as hide and seek, are all ways you and your grandchildren can learn that exercise is fun and not about hours of boredom.

It doesn't end as your grandchildren get older either – activities they feel awkward doing with their parents they will still do with their grandparents. The variety of opportunities is enormous and all it needs is effort and imagination on your part. Now try coming up with an excuse that holds water not to exercise!

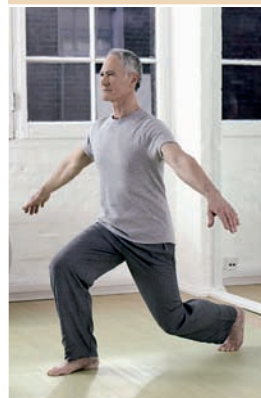
THREE TO TRY

Improve your flexibility and balance with these exercises. Remember, if you don't exercise regularly then check with your GP before starting a physical activity programme. Always stop if you feel dizzy, unwell or if there is any pain.



Floating arms

Sit on a stable chair. Keep your back straight and with your feet out in front, so you can see your toes, breathe in as you let your arms 'float up' – your shoulders should stay down. You will feel it under your arms as you use the muscles here. Only go as far as feels comfortable, over time the range of movement will increase. Breathe out as you lower the arms. Great for improving shoulder mobility. Do four repetitions.



Forward lunges

Stand with your feet hip width apart. Using your arms for balance, breathe in and step forwards onto your right foot, bending at the knee. Bend your left leg. Looking forward at a fixed spot will help you maintain your balance. Breathe out as you use the backside muscles of your left leg to pull you back to your start position. Repeat with the left leg leading. Try to ensure that your feet are hip width apart throughout the exercise. Start with two complete repetitions and build up to ten repetitions in total. This is a great circuit exercise.



Wall press ups

With your feet hip width apart, stand an arm's length away from the wall and rest your palms on the wall slightly more than shoulder width apart. Keeping your body tight, breathe in as you bend the arms and move your body towards the wall. Pause and then breathe out as you straighten the arms and return to the starting position. Try and keep your toes moving throughout the exercise and avoid the shoulders lifting towards your ears. Start with a set of five and build up to 15.