

Building a Stronger Body after 50

As you get older it can get more difficult to lose weight, but studies show you can still get into the best shape of your life in your fifties and sixties. By being more diligent in your exercise and nutrition, even if you have not been especially active before, it is not too late to transform your body and fitness level.

As the Baby boomers age they bring with them more health related issues that influence their ability to stay in physical shape. These can include heart disease, type II diabetes, high blood pressure and arthritis. Also, as we age we experience a loss of muscle tissue and a decrease in bone mass and thus a decrease in body strength and increased fragility. Inactivity can excel this process so it is more important than ever to try to stay active and adopt a healthy active lifestyle.

Each decade after our 20's we start to lose some muscle mass. This not only means that we are not as strong as we once were, but our metabolism is also affected. Since muscle is more "metabolically active" than fat (that means that muscle burns more calories than fat), we need fewer calories to maintain the same weight. That's why many people find it harder and harder to keep weight down as they age. Maintaining muscle mass not only helps to maintain a healthy weight but allows us to perform daily activities more easily and safely.

Between the ages of 50 and 80 a persons muscle reserves diminish by 40 per cent, and strength declines by 60 per cent. Both can be combated with resistance exercise. Many women over the age of 50 receive improvements in physical function as well as amazing body shaping results with strength training using light weights and bands. After the age of 50, both men and woman should be doing strength training 2 – 3 times per week. You can use exercise machines, resistance bands, free weights or even your own body weight in a personalized program. If you are unsure how to safely perform these types of weight bearing exercises, a personal trainer is a good option.

There are many safe exercise classes to choose from. Taking a class can make the exercise process more fun and you can meet new friends. Looking for the words, *sculpt*, *light weights* or *resistance* in the class title and making sure the class is described as being *safe for all levels* will ensure you can work at your own pace and strength level.

A personal trainer will not only design a customized program for you, but will suggest which classes will best suit your needs.

Practicing good posture and form in strength training is crucial to achieving safe and positive results. Proper breathing during each exercise is also important. The need for safe instruction has lead the 50 plus age group to be the largest growing group of users of personal trainers. If you have never done strength training, or it had been a while you will see results very quickly with the help of a trainer and the right program.

Your program, whether in a class or on your own, should include eight to ten exercises targeting all of the main muscle groups – legs (quads and hamstrings), chest, back, shoulders, and abdominals. Do the bigger muscle groups first (legs, chest, and back) because they require more energy.

You may not be ready to enter a body building contest in a week but you will gradually notice the exercises getting easier and you will start to have more energy throughout the day. It is never too late to transform and strengthen your body. More and more people over the age of 50 and 60 are getting into the best shape of their lives.

City Centre Health and Fitness, 399 Main St. Penticton, offers numerous daytime and evening strength training and body sculpting classes throughout the week as well as a new supervised adult exercise program that focuses on safe weight bearing exercises. . Contact Kirby at 250-487-1481