

5 fun ways to Get Fit and Get Flexible

How far up can you lift your arm? How close can you get to touching your toes? The answer depends on your flexibility, or your range of motion at any joint. Some of your joints may be more flexible than others. No matter how flexible you are now, you can improve at any age. Fun activities done once or twice per week can help. Flexibility helps prevent injuries and puts a bounce in your step.

1. Yoga

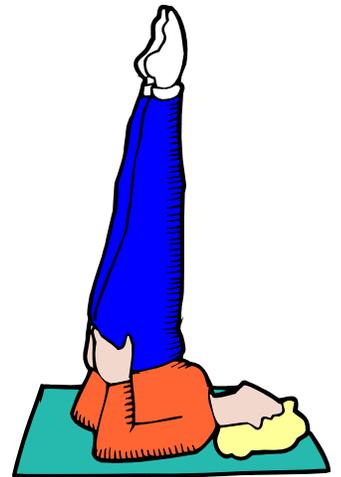
Yoga is 5,000 years old, but its benefits are very modern. Yoga can increase flexibility and reduce stress. It is good for bodies of any age. It's best to start with a few classes from a certified yoga teacher. You can find classes at yoga centers, fitness clubs and hospitals. Many DVDs are also available. These often are made for special audiences. Beginners or people with arthritis and back problems can find DVDs specially made for them.

2. Pilates

A German gymnast created Pilates exercises about 100 years ago. In some ways, Pilates is like yoga. The exercises focus on breathing, strength in the core muscles and flexibility. Pilates classes might move at a faster pace than yoga. Many classes mix yoga and Pilates. Look for classes taught by a certified instructor or on DVD.

3. Tai chi

Tai chi comes from China. It has been around for hundreds of years. Tai chi is good for any one. It doesn't matter if you are athletic, sedentary or elderly. You can modify tai chi to meet your goals. So it is really great for older people and people with a disability. The exercises help your balance, posture and strength. Your flexibility, coordination and concentration will also improve. You can find DVDs and online instructions for tai chi, but it may be best to learn it from a certified instructor.



4. Dance

All types of dance can help with flexibility. Just remember to be safe! Stretch joint muscles, tendons and ligaments slowly. Over time, you will become more flexible. Choose the type of dance that fits your rhythm and style. You may already know the steps. If not, learn them from a certified instructor. Injuries are no fun.

5. Swimming

If you have joint pain, the pool may be a good option. Water exercises or water aerobics can be a safe way to work on flexibility. This is because the water provides support. It makes it easier to move tender or older joints. Work with a certified, experienced instructor. This will help to prevent further problems.