

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXERCISE FOR HEALTHY AGEING

SUPPORTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS A MUST

Research has shown the importance of exercise in slowing down ageing and keeping up quality of life.

With many benefits of exercise in older age—such as prevention of falls, improvements in cognition, management of chronic diseases and increased longevity—exercise really is the key to happy, healthy, independent and joyful ageing.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of exercise in maintaining health has become even clearer.

In the human body, proteins are responsible for many physiological tasks, with the primary function of building and repairing cells, including assisting in the fight against any viral and bacterial infections. As skeletal muscle makes up almost half of the protein reserves in the body, muscles are the ‘banks’ we can withdraw from when our body needs to fight viruses and rebuild cells.

Understanding that muscles could act as an immune organ by producing acute phase protective proteins, regular strength training might be a crucial preventive action to fight illness.

During the extended lockdowns and isolation, many people decreased their activity level, resulting in the decline of lean muscle mass and function (sarcopenia). In just two weeks of physical inactivity, active older people can lose about 25 per cent of their strength.

For older people, this loss of muscle mass is more critical as it is more likely to impact general health and quality of life.



To stay happy, healthy and strong, Pat and Bernie are training under the supervision of Jonathan Duke (right), using the air-based HUR equipment.

During 2020 and 2021, Melbourne became the world champion of COVID-19 restrictions, with more than 250 days in lockdown. The six lockdowns meant less time spent outdoors, less distance travelled from home, and the closure of exercise facilities in the community and aged care settings.

During these ‘stay at home’ periods, many were searching for alternative ways of exercising. Due to the closures, businesses had to become innovative and create new modalities to reach out to keep people healthy, and socially connected.

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The combination of creativity, passion for health and care for its members, led a Melbourne over 50s health club to reach out and engage with people beyond their regular clientele.

Duke's in Melbourne adapted its business model to provide its members with flexible exercise options that could be performed at home. A 24-hour streaming platform of videos, all specifically designed for the needs of over 50s, was created to help members keep up their health. The vast library of over 100 constantly updated videos covered all aspects of fitness and health, such as strength and balance training, cardiovascular health, mental health and mindfulness, nutrition and flexibility.

As members have started to return to the gym, they appreciate more than ever the importance of consistent strength training in maintaining a healthy body and mind. Every part of the facility is tailored for this age group. The air-resistance based HUR equipment is the hero on the gym floor with the addition of multiple programs and classes, personal training, and wellness therapies such as remedial massage and exercise physiology.

Since opening in 2018, Duke's has gained the support and trust of the local community and has grown into a thriving health club—highlighting the demand for age-appropriate gymnasiums for people aged over 50, and the benefits such gyms could offer in residential aged care settings.

As a club member states, the impact on overall health makes a daily gym session worthwhile.

“Exercising daily and being mentally strong has helped me bounce back quickly after my two surgeries. I was told to take 12 to 16 weeks and recuperate slowly to get back to my daily routine. Both surgeons after each operation called me ‘Wonder Woman’ as I returned to the gym five weeks after my first operation and two weeks after my second!”

“I credit my fast recovery to my regular visits at Duke's and the ongoing support during lockdowns with Duke's Online. The older we get, the more important it is to keep fit and strong.”

Dr Tuire Karaharju-Huisman is Physiotherapist, Accredited Exercise Physiologist and Research Lead at HUR Australia.
For more information visit www.huraustralia.com.au



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