

# Live Healthy Georgia – Seniors Taking Charge!



January 2007 Newsletter

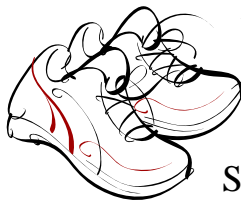
## It's a New Year, So Let's Get Moving!

By Mindy Bell, BS and Bree Marsh, MS

Happy New Year! To ring in 2007 and make it a great year, why not set a long-term goal toward better health?

Wouldn't it be great to strengthen your muscles and bones? Would you like to improve your balance, coordination, and mobility? Want to decrease the signs of chronic diseases, including arthritis? Want to achieve a healthy body weight and feel more energetic?

If you answered YES to any of these questions, then physical activity is for you!



Being active regularly is very important for our health and quality of life. A combination of strength training to build strong muscles and bones, endurance activities to condition the heart and lungs, and stretching for flexibility is important to get the full range of benefits physical activity has to offer. For older adults, being physically active is essential, as it can even help prevent falls and fractures, and may improve

mental health, too. If you do not currently engage in physical activity on a regular basis, it's never too late to start.

It is a good idea to check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program. After getting your doctor's approval:

First, it is helpful to set a few realistic and specific goals to work toward. An example is...

"I will try to accumulate 30 minutes of walking, three days per week."

Second, try to think of ways to stay motivated. Keeping in mind the many benefits of physical activity, including stronger muscles and bones, ease of movement in everyday activities, and decreased stress and depression, can help motivate you. Also, celebrate your achievements by rewarding yourself with something you enjoy; perhaps a soothing bubble bath or a new book or movie.

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Third, consider what equipment you may need. Many items that you may already have at home can be used for physical activity. A sturdy chair for seated strength and flexibility exercises, filled water bottles or soup cans to use as hand weights for upper body resistance, or an inexpensive exercise video are all convenient tools for being active at home. Your local discount store may carry other tools to try, such as resistance bands and ankle weights.

Remember that shoes with good support are important to protect your feet. Breathable, loose clothing will also help you to stay cool.



Fourth, be safe and start at an intensity level that you can manage. Doing too much too quickly can result in injury and may derail your efforts to be more active. Remember that a good type of activity to start with is walking. As you progress, choose a variety of endurance, strengthening, and flexibility activities that challenge all the major muscle groups.

Listen to your body when you are active. As you get stronger, increasing the time or intensity of your activities can help you progress to the next level.



Finally, learn how to stay on track. There may be times when activities such as vacation and family functions, or illness prevent you from sticking to regular physical activity. When this happens, try to stay positive and simply return to your routine as quickly as you can.

## **For more information, see:**

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's Growing Stronger program at:

[http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/growing\\_stronger/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/growing_stronger/index.htm)

The National Institute on Aging's Complete Exercise Guide at:

<http://www.niapublications.org/exercisebook/ExerciseGuideComplete.pdf>