



Food Hero for Older Adults

Focus on Flexibility



Loss of flexibility is a normal part of aging, but it can be improved with regular stretching.

Stretching exercises can be done almost anywhere and anytime.

Be flexible with fresh, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables. All can be healthy!

Try making meals ahead and freezing them in single-serving sizes to save time and energy.

Herbs and spices add flavor and color to food without adding extra salt, sugar and fat.

Flexibility allows your joints to move through their full range of motion without discomfort. Stretching exercises can increase flexibility. Examples include:



Daily Activity



Being Physically Active



Yoga or Tai Chi



Stretches Before and After Exercise

Benefits of Flexibility

- Improves blood flow to your organs and body parts.
- Helps with your posture, balance and muscle strength.
- Helps you move with ease for daily tasks and reduces chronic joint and muscle pain.
- Helps reduce your risk of strains and injuries from falls.

Add flexibility to your meals

Enjoy being flexible with your food choices and how you prepare them. Go to FoodHero.org for easy, tasty recipes such as My Personal Pizza.

Ingredients

- 1 **English muffin** (try whole grain)
- 3 Tablespoons **tomato sauce** or bean dip
- 2 Tablespoons grated **cheese**
- ½ cup chopped **vegetables, fruit** or **cooked meat** (try a combination)

Directions: Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Lightly toast English muffin halves. Spread half the sauce on each muffin half. Add cheese and toppings of your choice. Bake for 5 to 7 minutes until cheese is melted and lightly browned.



Classics Stay Strong

Use **dynamic stretches**, such as shoulder stretches, before physical activity to help you warm up.

Use **static stretches**, such as a hamstring stretch, after physical activity when your muscles are warm.

Many stretches can work for different abilities by using a chair, step or towel.

Stretch all muscles and body parts, such as your ankles, legs, hips, wrists, arms, shoulders and neck.

Talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions about doing flexibility exercises.

Types of Everyday Stretches

Dynamic stretches

allow your muscles to loosen up gradually. Do a stretch for a few seconds and repeat it 8 to 12 times.

Neck - Sit or Stand



Shoulder - Sit or Stand



Back and Chest - Sit or Stand



Static stretches allow your muscles to stretch longer. Hold a stretch for at least 30 seconds. Based on your comfort level, choose a standing, seated or floor position.

Hamstring - Sit or Stand



Calf - Stand



Quad and Hip Flexor - Sit



Tips

- Stretch gradually to let your joints and muscles adjust without pain.
- Breathe normally while stretching; avoid holding your breath.
- Stretch until you feel mild tension but not until you feel pain.
- Do not bounce while stretching because it increases your chance of injury.

Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults 65+

- Sit less and move more!
- At least **150 minutes a week** of **moderate intensity** activity.
- At least **2 days a week** of activities that **strengthen muscles**.
- Include activities that **improve balance**, such as standing on one foot.