



## Exercise and the Menopause

### Time Saver - No! Life Saver -Yes!

### Looking after the Body you're in

The menopause is yet another challenge along life's journey. It is a time to reflect on what you have achieved and what you can yet achieve. You can take positive steps to invest in your own future, not only by topping up your pension fund, but also by reviewing your current levels of physical activity, because being truly active has been shown to have a positive impact on your quality of life. It may also be necessary to review your diet, in the sense that you want to keep your body running at optimum efficiency to cope with the demands placed upon it. Make sure both the quality and quantity of food (fuel) keep you in tip top condition. Limiting fat and cholesterol intake is essential, in addition to eating your daily 5 portions of fruit and vegetables. Physical activity plays a crucial role in preparing for and coping with the physical changes brought about by the menopause, a sensible programmer of both healthy eating and physical activity will minimise the amount of excess fat in the body.

Aerobic (continuous) activities which challenge both the heart and lungs, making you slightly breathless, will help to protect these two vital organs and keep them in peak condition to service the whole body. Any activity which promotes blood flow also feeds muscle and connective tissue throughout the body and this can protect against arthritis and rheumatism.

#### *How much do I need to do?*

3 to 5 days a week, anything between 20 - 60 minutes of continuous activity, N.B. you can accumulate this by doing 10 minute bouts throughout the day.

#### *How can I achieve this?*

- Join your local KFA class **AND**
- get on your bike
- walk to the shops
- get a dog and take it for a walk
- get rid of your tumble drier and hang out the washing
- be a little more vigorous in your polishing and cleaning

Weight bearing activity which challenges individual muscles or muscle groups have been shown to increase bone density, thus protecting against osteoporosis. Strong muscles also protect and support the skeleton preventing possible injury and postural muscles, situated around the torso, in particular, can work hard against the effects of gravity and help you to walk tall both literally and figuratively.

*How much do I need to do?*

2 to 3 days a week. In exercise terms any action or movement repeated 8 to 15 times (repetitions) will be beneficial. The whole movement being done up to 3 times through (sets).

*What muscles should I target?*

All of them preferably, both lower and upper body, and in the torso.

*How can I achieve this?*

- Join your local KFA class **AND**
- peg out your washing
- use both your left and right hands when vacuuming and polishing or carrying the shopping
- any garden work

Strong muscles should also be flexible muscles. In other words reaching down to retrieve anything that has fallen on the floor, or reaching up to find the Christmas decorations stored on the top of the wardrobe, should not be suddenly challenging activities. Reaching and stretching activities should be as much a part of your active daily programme as muscle strengthening and aerobic work.

*How much do I need to do?*

See previous section, but everyday would be preferable

*What muscles should I target?*

See previous section

*How can I achieve this?*

Join your local KFA class **AND**

- Keep using all of the body to reach and stretch. Go that little bit further and 'step out' of your comfort zone.
- Don't keep everything too handy

*Can increasing physical activity have positive effects on some of the physical symptoms associated with the menopause?*

Yes. Night sweats, hot flushes, problems with concentration, and lowered self esteem may not be completely eradicated, but research has found that these symptoms can all be considerably reduced over time.

*And what about the feel good factor related to physical activity?*

Menopause can be a time when your self esteem and confidence take a veritable pounding. Your body seems to be out of control, hormone levels fluctuate erratically, almost like a teenager in reverse. Increasing physical activity can be a way to re-assert control, bring 'dancing until dawn' back on the agenda and consign every night as a couch potato to a page in your past



history. It has been well researched and documented that increased physical activity, particularly when done in a group has a positive psychological effect and this could be doubly beneficial at a time when confidence and self esteem are at a low ebb and stress levels are high.

#### *How can I do this?*

Join a KFA class

All KFA registered teachers are fitness professionals. They have the skills to provide you with a personalised physical challenge in their classes, in a social context where you can make new friends, have fun and do yourself a lot of good.

Time saver - No! Life saver - Yes! Why this title? Labour saving devices are all well and good BUT let's not forget our bodies were designed for work. As we get older our bodies no longer work quite so efficiently, the metabolic rate slows and fat is stored all too easily in the body. We need to keep active to ameliorate this effect. When you have the challenge of the menopause it is an opportunity to re-evaluate and consider your life options. To consider what you need to do to enjoy and get the most out of the rest of your life. A strong, healthy and active body will help you on your way to achieve your future goals. Remember chairs cause body rust, so go on, get active, get out there and enjoy the next big adventure.

**For more information please contact us for a brochure and registration form:- [kfa@keepfit.org.uk](mailto:kfa@keepfit.org.uk)**

#### References

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