

# Feel Great at Any Age

Getting older is a fact of life, but you can get in shape no matter what your age. Jennifer Gerali explains how to transition your body through the decades.

**When I first started working** in the fitness industry 20 years ago, the goal of my clients was always to lose weight. Now, they tell me they want to feel well and have their body function like it did when they were in their 20s. We all want to experience a healthy body as we age — both physically and mentally — and surviving the bumps in the road as each decade passes is the key.

Exercise classes have transitioned from high impact aerobic and step classes, to kickboxing, martial arts and many others — which some of us now attribute to our sore ankles, knees, hips and back.

These days, the trend is Pilates, yoga and fusion classes which blend different fitness techniques. Personal training has gone from bodybuilding and super slow training techniques, to functional training.

Fitness trends will come and go; however, if we treat our bodies well, there is no reason it won't serve you well. I have had to learn this lesson myself. Now, when my body hurts, I listen. You should, too.

## FITNESS OPTIONS

With so many fitness offerings available, how do you decide what's best? In my opinion, a balanced blend of fitness techniques that include cardiovascular training (walking, running, swimming, cycling); a form of resistance training (weight training or equipment-based Pilates); a stretching program; and a moderate nutrition plan will allow you

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to stay within a healthy weight range and prevent injuries. Remember, it's not about how many different types of exercise you perform, but how intelligently you utilize those techniques. I often explain to my clients that more is not necessarily better. You need to train smarter — not harder.

If you are new to exercising or returning from an injury, always consult your physician before beginning a new program. Also, whether you're interested in Pilates, yoga, resistance training or taking a group class, be sure to work with a certified instructor so they can teach you proper technique and prevent injuries.

## DIETING: THE 80/20 RULE

Did you know that there are over 300,000 diets or nutrition programs registered with the FDA? How do you choose which is right for you? I'm sorry to report there is no such thing as a quick fix when it comes to weight loss. The last thing you want to do is be a yo-yo dieter.

To maintain a healthy body weight, you have to burn whatever food or drink you put into your body. To lose weight, you have to burn more energy than what you ingest. I try not to think of proper nutrition as a "diet" because that just seems temporary. Instead, I tell people to adjust their eating to their lifestyle, keeping in mind what the goal is. Can you still enjoy that glass of wine with dinner, or dessert? Sure, but not seven nights a week. However, you should always enjoy the food that you eat. My personal nutritional goal is the 80/20 rule. If I eat mindfully 80 percent of the time, I can afford the indulgence 20 percent of the time. Seems like a pretty fair solution to me.

Regardless of what transition period you're trying to navigate, find a balance of good nutrition and exercise that you enjoy. If you need guidance, a professional trainer can provide assistance.

*Jennifer Gerali is a certified personal trainer and owner of Pilates, Fitness & Therapeutics.*

## TRANSITIONS: WHAT TO EXPECT

### Through your 40s and 50s:

As we age our metabolism slows down, so this is a time to focus on maintaining a moderate amount of muscle mass, increasing the cardiovascular aspect and being aware of what you put into your body.

### Through your 60s and 70s:

It's time to enjoy retirement. You may not have the same energy levels you once did, so regular exercise is even more important. Moderate exercise a few days a week can really boost your energy. Try something different like Pilates or yoga. Don't forget to work on your balance, as this will help to prevent falls down the road.

### Through Menopause:

This can be a long and frustrating process for women. The types of exercise and nutrition you've done before may have to be adjusted. As hormone levels fluctuate, women can lose muscle mass, and their metabolism slows down. It's important for you to adapt and try something new, as what you used to do to maintain your weight and energy may no longer work for you.

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