

There's no age limit on feeling great

How housebound seniors can stay fit this winter

By Craig Cormack

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If you're a senior living in a city like Montreal, you know all about feeling housebound in winter. Here are a few ways seniors in my movement and stretching classes keep fit and combat "winter fatigue."

Get strong with weights

Basic leg lifts using leg weights are good training for your quadriceps, the large muscles at the front of your thigh. You can also use dumbbells to strengthen your arms (biceps). Exercise elastics (as used in Pilates) are also useful.

To improve stamina, a treadmill is an excellent choice. There is, however, a more economical alternative.

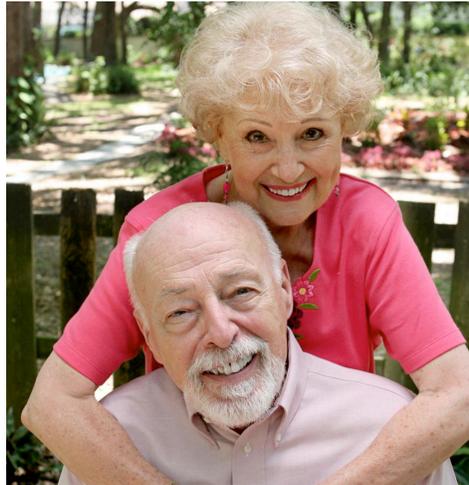
Get fit on the rebound

A rebounder is an inexpensive mini-trampoline that is very simple and fun to use. A scientific study by NASA published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology* states that "rebound exercise is the most efficient, effective form of exercise yet devised by man." The same study also states that "rebounding is 68% more efficient than jogging."

Rebounding firms your arms, legs, thighs, abdomen and hips.

"Rebound exercise is the most efficient, effective form of exercise yet devised by man." (NASA)

It strengthens your muscles, pumps your lymphatics, and fights fatigue. It relieves neck, back and head pain, improves blood circulation and oxygen flow, and promotes weight loss.



Improve your balance

- 1) Stand perpendicular to a kitchen chair with its back facing you. Hold on to the back of the chair with your right hand for support. Make sure your feet are side by side and a shoulder-width distance apart.
- 2) Advance your left foot ahead by two feet.
- 3) Transfer your weight by pushing your right heel down onto the floor and shifting your weight over to your left leg. Make sure you bend your left knee. Do not lift your right heel during the transfer.
- 4) Push down on your left big toe back through your left heel. Transfer the weight back to your right foot.
- 5) Repeat this weight transfer movement a number of times. Repeat weight shifting on the other leg.

Be flexible

Stand with your feet together. Interlace your fingers and stretch upward by pushing your palms up to the ceiling. Do this 3 times and then relax.

But don't overdo it

Always warm up before you start an activity. If you feel pain or you are out of breath, take a rest. Don't overdo it and don't forget to rest after you exercise.

If you are experiencing any health problems, or have not exercised in over a year, consult your doctor before starting an exercise program. Once you have been cleared for exercise, keep some basics in mind: drink a lot of water, wear comfortable clothes and proper footwear.

A few good exercises are all you need to stay in shape. Look into making them part of your daily routine.

Craig Cormack is a consultant at the McGill University Sports Medicine Clinic. He teaches Tai Chi-based exercise classes to seniors at the Greene Centre in Westmount and at the Yellow Door Social Club in Montreal.

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