



UnitedHealthcare

## **CREATIVE & RECREATIONAL WELLNESS**

**PHYSICAL & MENTAL EXERCISES FOR BETTER SENIOR LIVING**



UnitedHealthcare®

# CREATIVE & RECREATIONAL WELLNESS

## PHYSICAL & MENTAL EXERCISES FOR BETTER SENIOR LIVING

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

*Teaching older adults how to increase their daily physical and mental activity through creative and recreational exercises is the focus of today's workshop.*

### Introduction

Creative and recreational wellness for seniors refers to physical and mental activities designed to ensure older adults are active, healthy, and socially engaged. The focus of creative and recreational wellness is not on building a muscular physique, exercising for weight loss, or engaging in high intensity workouts, but on enjoyment, functionality, and maintaining independence. Physical and mental activity is vital for healthy aging and to prevent chronic health conditions, however:

- 25.4% of adults aged 50–64 years report no regular physical activity.
- 26.9% of adults aged 65–74 years report no regular physical activity among.
- 35.3% of adults 75 years and older report no regular physical activity.
- Nearly a third of Americans 65 and older have some level of cognitive impairment; and
- Less active seniors are more likely to experience cognitive decline.

The facts are simple... Many older adults in the United States do not meet the minimum recommendations for daily physical and mental activity.

### Benefits of Creative & Recreational Wellness

Enjoyment matters for seniors, because it directly affects whether or not they keep doing something. In this case, that something is exercising their bodies and minds. So, let's talk about some of the benefits creative and recreational wellness have for seniors.

**Mental and Emotional Health.** Enjoyable exercise can boost mood, reduce stress, and combat loneliness. Activities that feel playful or social also help reduce the risk of depression and cognitive decline, which are common concerns for seniors.

**Motivation.** Fun activities like dancing, water aerobics, or group walks, create positive associations, making it easier to stick with a routine over the long term.

**Quality of Life.** Enjoyable activities add a sense of purpose and pleasure to daily life, making exercise something to look forward to rather than avoid.

**Social Engagement.** Group-based “fun” exercises like pickleball or dance classes encourage social interaction, which supports emotional well-being and can even improve adherence to healthy routines.

**Consistency and Motivation.** If exercise feels like a chore, you are more likely to quit shortly after you begin. Fun activities like dancing, water aerobics, or group walks create positive associations, making it easier to stick with a routine over the long term.

**Better Physical Outcomes.** When seniors enjoy what they're doing, they move more freely, try new activities, and put in more effort. This can improve cardiovascular health, balance, strength, and more effectively than minimal or inconsistent participation.

### KEY TOPICS

Benefits of Creative & Recreational Wellness

Creative Physical Exercises for Seniors

Engaging Mental Exercises for Seniors

Renew Active Program by UnitedHealthcare

The UnitedHealthcare App



### Creative Physical Exercises for Seniors

Creative physical exercises for seniors focus on making movement engaging while supporting balance, strength, flexibility, and endurance. Let's take a look at some approaches.

#### Activity-Based Workouts

**Dance Classes:** Line dancing, ballroom, or Zumba Gold (a low-impact version).

**Gardening as Exercise:** Digging, planting, and carrying tools build strength and mobility.

**Walking Games:** Scavenger hunts, photo walks, or “walk and talk” groups for social engagement.





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### Water-Based Workouts

Aqua Aerobics or Aqua Yoga: Reduces joint stress while improving strength.

Water Walking: Simple laps in the shallow end, possibly with resistance equipment.

Floating Stretch Sessions: Using pool noodles to aid mobility exercises.



### Chair and Assisted Workouts

Chair Yoga or Tai Chi: For flexibility and balance.

Seated Strength Training: Resistance bands, light weights, or even water bottles.

Rhythm Drumming on Stability Balls: Fun, music-driven upper-body workout.



### Outdoor and Nature Activities

Bird-Watching Hikes: Encourages walking while staying mentally engaged.

Park Circuit Walks: Combine walking with stops for bodyweight moves (step-ups, wall push-ups).

Community Gardening: Combines movement with purpose.



### Technology Workouts

Virtual Reality (VR) Fitness: VR games that involve movement (e.g., virtual tennis or boxing).

Fitness Apps for Seniors: Programs offering guided sessions at home (e.g., Gentle Yoga apps).

Video Game Systems: Wii Fit or Nintendo Switch fitness games for low-impact activity.



### Fitness Apps for Seniors

- FitOn
- Daily Yoga
- MapMyWalk
- Tai Chi at Home
- Workout for Older Adults

### Creative Group Programs

Themed Movement Classes: Movement classes where everyone learns a low-impact dance routine set to music they love.

Story-Based Exercise: Acting out movements (e.g., “pretend you’re rowing a boat,” or “climbing a mountain”).

Intergenerational Fitness: Partnering with kids or grandkids for playful exercises.

### Everyday Functional Fitness

Housework Workouts: Turn cleaning, sweeping, or carrying laundry into intentional strength training.

Balance Challenges: Practice standing on one foot while brushing teeth or doing heel-to-toe walks around the house.

Cooking Fitness: Squats while waiting for the microwave, calf raises while stirring a pot.



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*Creative physical exercises are a great way for seniors to maintain strength and flexibility as and they can help with daily tasks, balance, fall and injury prevention.*

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### Engaging Mental Exercises for Seniors

Mental exercises are important for seniors because they help maintain and even improve cognitive function as the brain ages. Here are the main reasons they matter:

**Slows Cognitive Decline.** Mental exercises keep neural pathways active, they slow down age-related memory loss, and they reduce the risk of conditions like dementia and Alzheimer’s.

**Supports Emotional Well-Being.** Mental stimulation can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression by giving seniors a sense of purpose, promote personal connections and reduce loneliness.

## Engaging Mental Exercises for Seniors (Continued)

**Promotes Independence.** Keeping the mind sharp helps seniors better manage daily tasks, make sound decisions, and stay engaged in life, contributing to a higher quality of living.

Now let's review some of the most effective mental exercises for seniors, focusing on improving memory, problem-solving, and overall cognitive health.

### Puzzles and Games

- Crossword puzzles boost vocabulary and recall.
- Card games support memory and strategic thinking.
- Sudoku strengthens reasoning and pattern recognition.
- Jigsaw puzzles enhance visual-spatial skills and concentration.
- Board games encourage mental recall and flexibility.



### Brain Training Apps

**Lumosity or Elevate:** Structured exercises for memory, speed, and attention.

**BrainHQ:** Evidence-based activities designed to improve neuroplasticity.



### Memory Exercises

- Name and face recall exercises help you remember names of family and friends.
- Retelling stories from memory help you to strengthen recall.
- Shopping list challenge: Memorize and recall items without writing them down.

### Learn a New Skill

- Playing or learning music engages multiple areas of the brain.
- Studying a new language boosts cognitive reserve.
- Crafts or hobbies like knitting, woodworking, or painting, or combine motor skills with creativity.



duolingo



### Reading and Writing

- Reading books or articles improves your comprehension and focus.
- Creative writing or journaling encourages reflection.



Simply Piano



### Social Engagement

- Volunteering or mentoring keeps the brain engaged through purposeful activities.

Engaging mental exercises for seniors can boost mood, reduce stress, and improve overall well-being, contributing to a more positive and fulfilling life as you age.



AARP Staying Sharp®

### Renew Active Program by UnitedHealthcare

Renew Active® is a Medicare fitness program and is available at no additional cost, exclusively from UnitedHealthcare® Medicare Plans. Stay active with a free gym membership at a fitness location you select from a national network of over 17,000 locations.

- Increase mobility and build muscle with classes that use dumbbells, kettlebells, resistance bands, and body weight exercises.
- Give your joints a break by hitting the pool for aerobic and resistance-training classes like aqua aerobics, and swimming.
- Get your blood pumping and muscles activated with cycling and tai chi that make it easier to do your daily activities.
- Mix up your fitness routine with fun group classes that keep you moving, like Zumba® and self-defense.
- Stay focused on brain health with an online program from AARP® Staying Sharp® for Renew Active® members.

Get started by taking the Cognitive Assessment to see how you're performing today and to learn about strategies to help support brain health throughout your life. Take the Lifestyle Check-Ins and Additional Tests for even more insight.

**Staying Sharp® App.** Take AARP Staying Sharp interactive challenges with you on the go when you download the mobile app.

### THE UNITEDHEALTHCARE APP FOR MEMBERS

Get instant access to the answers and support you need, when you need through the UnitedHealthcare App. The UnitedHealthcare App connects you to your health plan details anytime, anywhere 24/7. Scan the QR code above to get started or register for a member account at <https://www.uhc.com/sign-in>.



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