

Suffering from 'Boomeritis?'

Then it's time to rethink the way you look at exercise

What's a baby boomer to do?

For years, boomers have been told that to slow the aging process – and prevent a long list of ailments – they need to stay physically fit.

And they listened. Boomers engaged in exercises like running and aerobics – just like they did in their 20s and 30s. And their bodies took a toll in the process.

According to a recent *New York Times* article, in fact, the number of boomers needing knee and hip replacements, or suffering from arthritis, torn ligaments and other sports injuries is skyrocketing. Philadelphia orthopedic surgeon Dr. Nicholas DiNubile has even coined a term for the phenomenon. He calls it 'boomeritis.'

For those of us trained in physical therapy, the growth in 'boomeritis' comes as no surprise. As Dr. DiNubile told the *New York Times*, "Physically, you can't do at 50 what you did at 25. We've worn out the warranty on some body parts. That's why so many boomers are breaking down."

Which brings us back to my original question: What's a boomer to do?

The answer is not to *stop* exercising, but to exercise *smarter*. That means exercising in ways that deliver health and fitness benefits – but without causing further damage to a body that is also demonstrating signs of wear and tear.

For some of us, that may also mean changing the way we think about exercise. Many people think of exercise as a form of recreation. We do what we enjoy or what we're good at, whether it's golf, biking, tennis or something else.

While there's certainly nothing wrong with recreation, boomers should also think of exercise as a systematic way to strengthen their muscular system, without compromising the integrity of their joints. They should think about exercise the same way they think about brushing their teeth: it may not be great fun, but it's something that must be done.

20 minutes that will change your life

The good news: there are ways to prevent 'boomeritis.' One of the safest and most effective is through an exercise approach that most boomers have never tried. It's called slow cadence resistance training.

The exercise technique is a scientifically based way of exercising that involves working out on specially designed physical therapy machines in ultra slow motion. The approach traces its roots to a 1982 University of Florida School of Medicine study that

showed that extremely slow weight lifting improved strength, bone density and overall function.

"It's an experience that's unlike what most people associate with exercise," explains Laura Miller, R.N., co-owner of 20 Minutes to Fitness, St. Louis' first slow-cadence fitness center with locations in Clayton and Chesterfield.


A typical *20 Minutes to Fitness* workout takes only about 20 minutes – and is completed just once or twice a week. This small time commitment makes reaching health goals more achievable.

During these sessions, a personal trainer guides you through exercises engaging all major muscle groups. "Instead of completing reps at a normal pace, you lift and lower the weights in ultra slow motion – eliminating momentum and forcing your muscles to do all the work," says Miller. "Because the work is done by your muscles, you don't have to worry about wearing out bones, joints, ligaments or tendons. The workout progresses only as you become stronger, so there is no overdoing it."

"Not only do slow-cadence workouts stimulate lean muscle formation far more efficiently and safely than regular weight lifting or aerobics, they cut the risk of exercise-related injuries to almost nil," says Miller. "They increase bone density, helping prevent osteoporosis. Perhaps most importantly, these workouts are safe for all fitness levels – from professional athletes to senior citizens to people recovering from injuries."

Miller adds, "This way of exercising is more than just a resistance program, it's a philosophy of health that takes into account the value of proper nutrition."

Once an obscure practice, slow-cadence techniques have grown in popularity in recent years. They've been featured on CBS' 48 Hours by slow-cadence enthusiast Leslie Stahl and have been endorsed by athletic trainers, fitness experts and doctors, including Fulton C. Kornack, M.D., who is on the clinical faculty of Orthopedic Surgery at Harvard Medical School.

20 Minutes to Fitness' roster of clients includes more than a dozen St. Louis area doctors. These doctors – like the rest of today's boomers – grew up exercising. Slow cadence may just be the "extended care warranty" they need to keep their bodies in good repair for years to come. 

by Casey Schulte, P.T.

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