

Volunteer Leader Training Guide

Increasing Physical Activity as We Age: Fit in Ten

Dr. LaVona Traywick, Assistant Professor - Gerontology
Easter H. Tucker, Associate Professor - Nutrition
Katie Cobb, County Extension Agent - Family and Consumer Sciences

Introduction

We are often told to exercise, but what does that actually mean? There are actually four recommended ways or styles of exercise, and to get all of the benefits of physical activity, you should do all four types of exercise. These are 1) balance exercises, 2) endurance or aerobic exercises, 3) strength training exercises and 4) stretching or flexibility exercises. But it is not just what we do but how often. According to the National Institute on Aging and the American College of Sports Medicine, adults should exercise three to five days a week for 20-60 minutes of either continuous or intermittent activity to equal a minimum of 150 minutes. By intermittent, they mean a minimum of 10-minute segments of exercise throughout the day. Many health benefits from exercise can be achieved at lower intensities of physical activity if the frequency and duration of the exercise are appropriate.

Target Audience

- Adults
- EHC members

Needs

- 6-8 soft objects (see Icebreaker)
- 2-3 sheets chart paper/poster board or a chalk or white board
- small note cards/index cards
- markers/crayons/colored pencils
- clock (not digital) or paper plate with clock face

Optional Need: “Fit in 10” DVD

Fact Sheets: Increasing Physical Activity as We Age:

FSFCS30, Exercise Recommendations
FSFCS31, Balance

FSFCS32, Endurance
FSFCS33, Strength Training
FSFCS34, Stretching
FSFCS35, Eating Healthy as You Age

Objectives

Participants will:

- Learn the recommendations for frequency and duration of exercise.
- Increase knowledge about exercise practices.
- Gain an understanding of the four different types of exercise.
- Be shown examples of different types of exercise.
- Evaluate their own level of physical activity and modify as needed.
- Discuss barriers to exercise and how we can overcome barriers.
- Set an exercise goal/nutrition goal.
- Increase their knowledge of eating healthy as they age.

Icebreaker: Group Juggling

Leader will need 6 to 8 soft objects of different size, weight and shape such as Nerf balls, koosh balls, stuffed toys, beach ball, etc. **SAFETY:** Make sure all objects are soft and will not injure participants if (when) contact is made. Counsel against “hard” throws.

The objective is to throw balls or other objects around a group trying not to drop any.

Step 1: Leader will throw ball to someone across the group. Say the name (ask if necessary) of the person you are throwing to and remember who it is. They in turn will throw it to someone else, etc., until everyone has caught and thrown the ball. (*LARGE groups may need to break into smaller groups.*)

Step 2: Practice! Always throw to the same person, say their name before throwing and concentrate on the person throwing to you.

Step 3: Add additional balls or objects. Time how long it takes for one object to make it around. Count number of drops. Try to improve as a whole group. Reverse direction.

Processing:

Ask participants how difficult this activity was for them. Did practice help?

Note: The more balls in the air, the more balls get dropped. (*How does this work with our lives?*)

Note: Practice handling, throwing and catching. This helps develop skills and do a better job. (*Do we need to practice exercising? Will, say balance, get easier with practice?*)

Note: Helping each other – cooperation – keeps the balls moving faster, safer. (*Was it easier to do this with help from our friends?*)

Balls are different size, weight, shape – like us!

NOTE: If you are teaching this as one large lesson that includes all six fact sheets, keep reading. If you are breaking up the lesson into six lessons, skip to page 4.

For One Lesson (on all six fact sheets)

Instead of having participants sit down after icebreaker, keep them standing in circle. Ask them: “If you think the activity we just did was physical activity, go to the north side of the room. If you think the activity we just did was exercise, go to the south side of the room.” When they get into two groups (LARGE group may get into several small groups), ask them to come up with a definition for “physical activity” and “exercise” in their groups. Write their definitions on poster board, chart paper, chalkboard or whiteboard (whatever is most convenient for you). Then, go over definitions from Fact Sheet 1 and have them demonstrate physical activity and exercise (physical activity may be walking around the mall leisurely shopping; exercise may be bicycling up a few hills and getting your heart rate up). Let them come up with some activities. As you demonstrate the different activities, discuss how much exercise they need (depending on the group).

Choose one exercise from each fact sheet (**FSFCS31 through FSFCS34**) to demonstrate and have participants do. Pick out one or two major points of each fact sheet and discuss as you practice the exercise.

Have participants sit down. Choose one or two major points from **FSFCS35, *Eating Healthy as You Age***, and discuss. Have participants think about their diets and what nutrients they may need to include more of.

Pass out fact sheets.

Have a posterboard or chart paper with “SMART Goals” written on it. Talk about what SMART Goals are (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound) and how to set one. Instead of saying, “I want to exercise more,” a SMART goal would sound more like, “I will walk at the park four days a week for the next three weeks.” Hand out note cards and have them write down a SMART goal for themselves. Give them several minutes to think and write it out. Markers, crayons and colored pencils may help decorate their goals so that they can be posted somewhere and used as reminders.

If time permits, get out your icebreaker objects again. Toss them around, but this time instead of saying names, they will say a barrier to exercise (such as time, money, lazy, etc.). After they all come up with a barrier, discuss ways they could overcome those barriers.

Finish up with the icebreaker objects once again. This time, have them tell what they thought was the most important lesson learned today. Remind them to post their goals and to work on them. Report back at your next meeting. (EHC members should report results from the next meeting on their Monthly Report.)

For Six Lessons

Lesson 1: Fact Sheet FCS30, *Exercise Recommendations*

The simple answer to the question “Who should exercise?” is everybody! Contrary to traditional thinking, regular exercise helps, not hurts, most senior adults. Individuals become sick or disabled more often from not exercising than from exercising. Many individuals who have chronic diseases, or risk factors for them, may actually improve with regular exercise. Almost all adults, regardless of age or condition, can safely improve their health and independence through exercise and physical activity.

Instead of having participants sit down after the icebreaker, keep them standing in a circle. Ask them, “If you think the activity we just did was physical activity, go to the north side of the room. If you think the activity we just did was exercise, go to the south side of the room.” When they get into two groups (LARGE group may get into several small groups), ask them to come up with a definition for “physical activity” and “exercise” in their groups. Write their definitions on posterboard, chart paper, chalkboard or whiteboard (whatever is most convenient for you). Then, go over definitions from Fact Sheet 1 and have them demonstrate physical activity and exercise (physical activity may be walking around the mall leisurely shopping, exercise may be bicycling up a few hills and getting your heart rate up). Let them come up with some activities. As you demonstrate the different activities, discuss how much exercise they need (depending on the group).

Hand out index cards and **Fact Sheet FCS30, *Exercise Recommendations***, as participants get seated. Have participants write down ways they could get exercise this week. Discuss the importance of doing something even if it is for just 10 minutes. Now ask participants to share some of their ideas. How can they share this information with family and friends? You may use your icebreaker objects – have them share a tactful way to encourage family and friends to exercise.

Lesson 2: Fact Sheet FCS31, *Balance*

Balance exercises help prevent a common problem in older adults – falls. Falling is a major cause of broken hips and other injuries that often lead to disability and loss of independence. Some balance exercises build up your leg muscles, while others require you to do simple activities, like briefly standing on one leg to work on your stability. Balance exercises can be performed as often as desired, preferable on most or all days of the week.

Get out your icebreaker objects again! Toss an item around, and have participants name ways that they may have practiced balance growing up (learning to walk, walking on a log, etc.). The next time around, ask them to name some reasons why balance is important (check **Fact Sheet FCS31, *Balance*** and go over any ideas they may not have mentioned). You may want to discuss balance systems from the fact sheet. Perform the Balance Segment of “Fit in 10” or choose at least three of the five balance exercises, and demonstrate/practice one before moving on to another. Take your time. Finish up with asking for suggestions – when can you practice your balance?

Lesson 3: Fact Sheet FCS32, *Endurance*

Endurance exercises increase your breathing and heart rate. They improve the health of your heart, lungs, and circulatory system. Having more endurance not only helps keep you healthier; it can also improve your stamina for your activities of daily living. Endurance exercises may also delay or prevent many diseases associated with aging, such as heart disease and diabetes.

Endurance exercises can be divided into sessions of no less than 10 minutes at a time. You should aim for at least three 10-minute sessions a day until you can build up to a minimum of 30 minutes of continuous endurance exercise on most or all days of the week. More often is better, and every day is best.

Ask participants, “What is one thing that you enjoy doing, and you wish you had more energy for?” Ask them if their endurance is good, or not so good?

What is endurance exercise? (Discuss from **Fact Sheet FCS32, *Endurance***.) Why should we care about it? (Hand out fact sheet and discuss.) Have participants stand up and walk in place while swinging arms (warm up). As you warm up, discuss guidelines and ways to get started with endurance exercise. After warm up, then start walking in place, keeping in mind that you want them to be able to talk while walking in place. Have them share with a neighbor ways they could add endurance exercises into their routine while still walking or marching in place. Slow down gradually (cool down). Take some deep breaths. Sit down, ask for volunteers to share ways they could add endurance activities or choose to perform the Endurance Segment from the “Fit in 10” DVD to demonstrate/practice.

Lesson 4: Fact Sheet FCS33, *Strength Training*

Strength training builds your muscles, which makes you stronger. This increased strength will enable you to continue to do things on your own. Strength exercises also increase your metabolism, which helps in maintaining your weight and keeping your blood sugar in check. That’s important because obesity and diabetes are major health problems for older adults. Studies suggest that strength exercises may also help prevent and treat osteoporosis.

Strength exercises should be performed on all of your major muscle groups at least twice a week, preferable every other day. It is not recommended to do strength exercises of the same muscle group on any two days in a row as the muscles need time to recover and grow stronger.

Ask participants what they think of when they hear “strength training.” Now, what do they think about when they hear “weightlifting,” then “resistance training.” Discuss the differences between the three. Use **Fact Sheet FCS33, *Strength Training***. Have a volunteer come to the front. Hand them a light weight or can. Ask them to do a biceps curl for every reason why we should strength train. If they get tired, they can go to toe raises (have a chair or wall nearby). As participants stand up or get ready (warm up), discuss what to do to get started, safety and how often to train. Perform the Strength Segment from the “Fit in 10” DVD, or choose at least three exercises from the fact sheet and demonstrate/practice one before moving on to the others. To finish up, have participants cool down while sharing ways they could add strength training to their daily life.

Lesson 5: Fact Sheet FCS34, *Stretching*

Stretching exercises help keep your body flexible by stretching your muscles and the tissues that hold your body's structures in place. Certain stretches are recommended to help individuals recover from injuries and to prevent injuries from happening in the first place. Flexibility also may play a part in the prevention of falls.

Stretching exercises should be performed at least three times a week, preferably daily. Stretching exercises should be performed after endurance and strength exercises, when your muscles are warm. If stretching exercises are the only kind of exercise you are doing, always warm up your muscles first.

Start off by asking participants to demonstrate a cat taking a nap. Now, imagine that the "cats" wake up slowly. Ask participants to show how a cat wakes up and stretches. Get your clock out (it should say 12 o'clock). Now, go around the room asking participants one by one to demonstrate a stretch that may be needed at 12, 1, 2, 3 and so on. (For example, at 12 noon you might stretch your back after getting up from eating lunch; at 1 p.m. you might stretch your shoulders after washing the lunch dishes.) As they demonstrate one at a time, you can discuss reasons why stretching is important (from **Fact Sheet FCS34, *Stretching***).

Discuss how to stretch properly, demonstrating how and leading the group in a warm up. Perform the Stretching Segment from the "Fit in 10" DVD, or choose three stretching exercises (or more) and demonstrate/practice one before moving on to the others. To finish up, have participants cool down while sharing ways they could add stretching to their daily life.

Lesson 6: FCS35, *Eating Healthy as You Age*

If your group has snacks, discuss what will be served before meeting. Once more get out your icebreaker objects!! Toss a different object around while having participants name nutrients that are needed and why.

Go over **Fact Sheet FCS35, *Eating Healthy as You Age***, and discuss ways to include those nutrients. Pass out index/note cards, and have participants write down one nutrient they need to increase and how they will work on that for the next three weeks.

Have a poster board or chart paper with "SMART Goals" written on it. Talk about what SMART Goals are (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound) and how to set one. Instead of saying, "I want to exercise more," a SMART goal would sound more like "I will walk at the park four days a week for the next three weeks." Hand out note cards and have them write down a SMART goal for themselves (choosing one item from the six lessons). Give them several minutes to think, and write it out. Markers, crayons and colored pencils may help them to decorate their goals so they can be posted somewhere and used as reminders.

If time permits, get out your icebreaker objects again. Toss them around, but this time instead of saying names, they will say a barrier to eating well (such as time, money, lack of knowledge, etc.). After they all come up with a barrier, discuss ways they could overcome those barriers.

Finish up with the icebreaker objects once again. This time have them tell what they thought was the most important lesson learned today. Remind them to post their goals and to work on them. Report back at your next meeting. (EHC members should report results from the next meeting on their Monthly Report.)

Additional Resources

- “Exercise: A Guide From the National Institute on Aging” can be ordered at <http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/ExerciseGuide/>.