



CHARLBURY Community Centre

Benefits of Exercise in the Older Generation

As we grow older, it becomes increasingly important to remain active, stay healthy and maintain independence. A large percentage of 65's and over spend more than half their day sitting or lying down, making them the most sedentary age group. Interestingly, weakness and poor balance associated with older age is linked chiefly to inactivity, rather than to old age itself. At the Community Centre Gym the majority of our members are aged over 60.

Exercise for older people does not have to mean intense workouts; just becoming a little more active can improve overall wellbeing significantly. At Charlbury Community Centre I tailor exercise to suit all fitness abilities, in addition we offer all kinds of other classes and activities (see the end of this article for some examples).

I have listed below some of the most important benefits of regular exercise in the older generation:

Improvement in bone density, muscle mass and reduced risk of falling or fracturing bones.

Regular exercise helps to increase muscle strength, bone density and coordination. This can be helpful for reducing the risk of falls as a result of increased balance. Furthermore, weight-bearing exercise such as walking or jogging can help to increase bone strength and reduces the risk of developing osteoporosis and fracturing bones, if you do happen to fall. The WHO (World Health Organisation) suggest that regular exercise can reduce the risk of fracturing a hip by 40%.

Reduced risk of stroke, heart attack and other physical diseases.

Engaging in regular cardiovascular exercise, such as brisk walking or cycling, increases blood flow to the heart. This makes the heart muscles stronger, reducing the risk of high blood pressure and other coronary related diseases. Studies also show that taking part in regular exercise can help benefit many chronic conditions including diabetes, high cholesterol and arthritis.

Increased overall happiness and well-being.

Staying active and taking part in some form of regular exercise not only improves your physical health, but boosts your mental health and overall well-being too.

Studies have found that those who undertake regular exercise have a lower risk of developing depression. Moreover, increasing your physical activity also heightens your pain tolerance, and gives added peace of mind and increased confidence that you are physically fit enough for activities such as walking to the local shops alone or playing with your grandchildren.

Increased sociability, confidence and independence.

Studies examining exercise in older generations have found that regular physical activity led to improvements in functional reach and balance, and reduced participant's fear of falling.

Furthermore, as many older people report feelings of loneliness and isolation, undertaking regular exercise such as a walk round the park is a great way to catch up with friends or meet new people. Exercise therefore greatly increases both independence and sociability.

Reduced risk of developing Dementia and Alzheimer's.

Despite age being a risk factor for developing dementia, evidence from the **Alzheimer's Society** shows that completing regular physical activity is one of the best ways to reduce the risk of dementia.

One study of 716 older healthy people with an average age of 82, found that people who were in the bottom 10% of daily activity were more than twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than those in the top 10%.

Some of the Activities you can do here in Charlbury.

There are so many different ways to improve your activity levels here in Charlbury – something to suit every age and ability level, whether you prefer to do it in private or in a sociable group, as a sport, dancing or gentle strength and balance exercises with people of a similar age. Below are some examples, but do have a look at Charlbury Community Centre's website (www.charlburycommunitycentre.org.uk) or call in and pick up a What's On leaflet when we reopen, or speak to Jason:

- Community Gym – open every morning. Tailored exercise programmes are made for each individual
- Line Dancing – gentle exercise for mind and body that's also fun. Two classes a week (currently on Zoom)
- Circuit Training and Body Conditioning Classes – more vigorous but can be done on different levels. Five classes a week (currently on Zoom)
- Table tennis, badminton, pickleball, volleyball. All have sessions where you can play with others and should be restarting outdoors in April, indoors in May
- Walking Football. A gentle version of the beautiful game! Two sessions a week
- Strength and Balance classes, supported by Age UK
- Yoga, Pilates, Barre Fit, Feldenkrais and other classes

Obviously, some of these activities are suspended during lockdown and others are being done online, but the Community Centre should be up and running again soon, all being well.

If you would like some more advice on getting started with an exercise programme and what might be suitable for you, please get in touch:

Jason@charlburycommunitycentre.org.uk or ring 01608 811878

Jason Biles

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