

6 Myths About Fitness After 50

Turning 50 is considered a landmark for one big reason: It is the age when many of us think about slowing down because we're physically over the hill.

No longer blessed with the energy, flexibility or springy joints of youth, it's easy to let exercise fall by wayside as we hit the half-century mark.

But experts say there is no medical reason to wind down after hitting the big "five-oh." In fact, maintaining the pace of activity into your 50s and beyond is vitally important to health, say top doctors.

New York fitness expert Edward Jackowski, M.D., is author of seven books, including the best-selling *Escape Your Shape*. Gabe Mirkin, M.D., is an Orlando, sports medicine physician in his 70s who bikes more than 100 miles a week. Newsmax Health asked these two authorities for their top middle-age fitness myths.

Myth No. 1: If you have a bad back, bad knees or suffer from diabetes, you should limit exercise to avoid further injury.

Fear of injury is common as we age, says Dr. Jackowski. But, he says, "It is never too late to start and to maintain an exercise program."

Ask your doctor to recommend exercises for your specific situation. Recumbent stationary bicycling is often touted for those with joint and back conditions. It supports the back and puts minimal impact on knees.

Myth No. 2: You'll burn more fat if you exercise on an empty stomach.

Not so, says Dr. Mirkin. Studies have shown that you burn the same amount of fat whether your stomach is full or empty. Having a small snack before working out actually gives you more stamina so you can burn more calories.

Myth No. 3: Stretching is more important for older folks.

A study published in *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* journal revealed that when you stretch a muscle for more than 60 seconds, you won't perform as well because the muscle won't contract as needed. Stretching is of value only to people who need extreme flexibility, like ballet dancers. It won't make you stronger or prolong life.

Myth No. 4: The best time to exercise is in the morning.

Dr. Jackowski says there is no best time to exercise. Get active at whatever time works for you. One caveat: Exercising right before bedtime can cause insomnia.

Myth No. 5: Doing crunches reduces "middle-age spread."

Nonsense, says Dr. Mirkin. Sit-ups and crunches burn fat and make abdominal muscles stronger, but they don't reduce belly fat any more than any other exercises. Eating right and being in overall good shape is what trims the waistline.

Myth No. 6: You shouldn't exercise when you are ill.

The general rule is that if you have a fever that indicates an infection, your heart muscle may be at risk, so rest. However, common mild respiratory illnesses, such as sore throat or nasal congestion associated with colds, should not stop your workouts.

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