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How to Work Out For Longevity, According to Experts

What Kind of Exercise Is Best For Longevity?

When it comes to working out for longevity, there are a few exercises and types of movement to keep in mind, says Mark Kovacs, PhD, FACSM, CSCS, the vice president of health and performance at Canyon Ranch. That includes but is not limited to the following:

- **Resistance Training:** "Exercise programming for longevity, and specifically for female longevity, should incorporate many components, but one that is arguably the most important is increasing resistance training," Dr. Kovacs says. Resistance training comes with a wide range of longevity benefits, including better hormonal function, better fall prevention, improvements in bone density, decreased joint and muscle pain, and potentially improved body image. One example of total body resistance training is a trap-bar deadlift, which Dr. Kovacs says you can try by picking up an appropriately heavy weight from the floor. "Ensure good technique and try to increase resistance on a regular basis."

- **Zone 2 Exercises:** For longevity training, Dr. Kovacs recommends focusing on a combination of higher-intensity exercise and what are called "zone 2" exercises. "Zone 2 is specifically at an intensity that is hard enough that it raises heart rate and breathing rate, but you can still maintain a conversation," Dr. Kovacs says. These exercises can increase VO2 max, or "the maximal amount of oxygen you can take in and utilize during exercise," he explains. Cycling, swimming, rowing, running, and cardio on the elliptical are all examples of zone 2 exercises.
- **Eccentric Training and Cardiovascular Work:** As far as slowing the decline of lean muscle and strength, Dr. Alamdari recommends a combination of eccentric training for muscle mass and cardiovascular work for better lipid profiles, cholesterol levels, and overall longevity. "You need to think about a hybrid way of exercise because the eccentric contraction of your muscle that's load-bearing or resistance-based is really important to preserve your muscle mass," he says. Eccentric exercises like lowering into a squat or pushing back into a Romanian deadlift help lengthen the muscles, absorb shock, and prepare the body for concentric exercises (which shorten or contract the muscles). While concentric exercises are also good for strength, studies show that eccentric training is more effective at building and preserving muscle mass, which is helpful as we age. Low-impact cardiovascular activity is good for longevity, too — but on its own, it doesn't address this progressive loss of muscle mass (and high-impact cardio isn't always safe or sustainable).

Ultimately, as you age, a hybrid model emphasizing cardiovascular movement and low-impact resistance training will be your best bet for a longer, healthier life. In fact, when compared to standard American physical activity guidelines of 150 minutes per week of moderate cardio and strength training, the Healthy Aging Study found that for women, a low-impact resistance-training workout (e.g. the Pvolve Method) was more effective for physiological changes such as hip function, body strength, mobility, and stability, as well as for quality-of-life improvements like increased energy and lower blood lipids.