

Get-fit guide for over 50s

Produced by Damart in association with Fitness Over Fifty Ltd

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It's essential to make a conscious effort to stay fit and mobile once you're 50 and over, so Damart has put together a handy guide full of advice about exercise, maintaining mobility, what to wear whilst you work out, and healthy eating. Damart worked with Fitness Over Fifty to ensure we bring you the top get-fit tips around for those over 50.

Fitness and exercise reference guide

These simple and light exercises can be done on a daily basis to make sure you stretch and work your muscles. Do three sets of ten on each of the exercises below, except downward dog and wall sit, which you can just hold in position for ten seconds at a time.



Downward dog

What: The downward dog is a classic yoga movement which stretches out the whole body and in particular, strengthens the arms and legs.

How: Position yourself on all fours and push your bum into the air so your legs are straight and your arms are helping to hold your body up (directly beneath your shoulders for maximum support). Hold for 20 seconds.

Leg raises

What: Leg raises are a simple exercise that will help you maintain mobility whilst working the lower ab muscles and hip flexors.

How: Lie down, and place both hands at your sides or beneath your bum. Raise one leg at a time slowly, making sure you keep it straight keeping the foot at 90 degrees to the leg. To make it a little bit harder, raise both legs at the same time and slowly lower.





Squats

What: Squats are a fantastic all lower body workout, as it involves movement at three joints – hips, knees and ankles. You don't need any additional equipment to do them. Squats also provide a quick and easy way to build up strength and muscle, as well as improve balance.

How: Place your feet shoulder width apart and turn your feet out slightly (around 30 degrees). Bend your hips and knees (pointed outwards) and keep your lower back neutral. Squat down as far as you can go (the lower down, the better) then back up, making sure you lock your hips and knees. Keep looking forwards to help maintain the back position. Do it slowly, each rep taking 5-10 seconds.

Bicep curls

What: Bicep curls solely target the bicep muscles, but it's a great weight training exercises to keep your arms mobile and retain/build strength in your arms. You can use some light dumbbells and practice this in the comfort of your own home or at the gym.

How: Stand up straight with a dumbbell in each hand (start small and light and build up the weight over a few weeks or months). Moving your lower arms only, curl the weights up towards your chest and slowly lower. Keep upper arms welded to the side of the body and don't lean forwards or backwards. Make sure it's a controlled movement, and that your arms aren't flopping down after a rep.





Overhead press

What: The overhead press works primarily the shoulder muscles with contribution also from the triceps – which are the ‘push’ muscles at the rear of the upper arm. This can be done without weights, but ideally, you can use some small dumbbells to make the exercise a little more challenging.

How: Start with all the angles at 90 degrees – the upper arms parallel to the floor and the lower arms vertical. Holding a weight in each hand, press them over your head until you lock your elbows, and slowly control the weights back down so your both angles are at 90 degrees again.

Jumping jacks

What: Jumping jacks is an old-school exercise that works the body all over – especially getting the heart rate going. It’s a much more exciting version of cardio, and is a far cry from pounding the treadmill at the gym whilst staring into space. It’s much more time efficient too, as you get much more exercise in a shorter time.

How: Stand still with your feet together and arms at your side, then jump so your legs are split and pointing outwards, whilst raising your arms to the side of you to parallel with the floor or higher. Then jump back to the start position. Start at 10 jumps and try to build up over time.



Half plank

What: A half plank is an easier beginner’s version of the full plank and it’s a great way to engage your core muscles, which in turn help to support your back and wider body.

How: Kneel on the floor with your weight supported by your knees and lower arms. You can clench hands together for stability too. Keep your back flat and hold for 10 seconds or longer – depending on your strength and ability.

Wall sit

What: Wall sits are another all-lower body exercise, and you can really feel the burn with this one! It looks very easy, but you feel the legs work from very soon into the start – and the muscles that work the most are the quadriceps, the big muscles on the top side of the upper legs.

How: Choose an empty and flat wall, and sit against it with your knees and hips angled at 90 degrees. Hands rest on your thighs. Look straight ahead to help keep the shoulders against the wall. Hold for ten seconds build up from there eventually to a minute or longer.



Remember, you can always make any of the exercises above more difficult by using heavier weights, or increasing the amount of repetitions or time you do. Never move weights quickly – the longer you take over a repetition the better.

If you are looking for further exercise ideas, take a look under the 'Workouts' tab of www.FitnessOverFifty.co.uk – here you will find ideas for many more exercises, including Chris Zaremba's '20:20 Workout' which is full-body workout comprising 20 different exercises in 20 minutes done at home – so you don't have to go near a gym if you don't want to!

Activity ideas

Nordic Walking

[Nordic walking](#) is beginning to really take off in countries all over the world, and is especially popular in the UK. Nordic walkers use poles to make sure that the upper body gets just as much work as the legs, and the poles also give additional support and help propel the walker along.

It's great news for those of you that want to ease your way back into exercise after a long time off, or an operation that requires you to slowly build up your stamina and strength.

Aqua Aerobics

Working out in water is a low-impact activity that is on the rise for those that want to avoid extra stress or pressure on their body. The main benefits of aqua aerobics are that water supports the body and provides resistance and the pressure helps pump blood around the body. Some aqua aerobics classes focus on bodyweight, whilst others use specialist dumbbells, kickboards and hydro discs.

Find out more about [Aqua Aerobics](#) here.

Tai Chi

Tai chi originates from thirteenth century Chinese martial arts, but has slowly caught on in many other areas of the world. You should be able to find a fairly local tai chi class near you by looking in the internet or yellow pages. [Tai chi](#) is widely known for its health benefits, and helps to reduce stress, improve balance and increase strength and mobility. There's also speculation that tai chi can help improve arthritis symptoms.

Maintaining Mobility

Mobility and recovery times slow down significantly as you get older, so it's important to keep up momentum when it comes to stretching and exercising. The best thing to do is work on increasing circulation and loosening up your muscles.

Increasing circulation

As you get older, illness and medical conditions can make it much harder for your body to pump blood around. This can lead to swelling and cramping if it's left unresolved.

A good way to increase and improve your circulation is by applying ice or heat to inflamed muscles. Booking a professional massage is another quick-fix way to heal sore muscles. Massage therapy helps to reduce stress and strain on the muscles and promote general relaxation.

Stretching each muscle group on a daily basis is a simple way to help with your circulation, and can easily be done at home.

Keep track of your activity

A good way to challenge yourself and measure improvement is to keep track of your fitness. Relatively new to the market, [Fit Bits](#) are a similar design to watches and can be worn around your wrist. They cleverly track your heartbeat and workouts and keep record of how far you've travelled. Some of the products give a detailed summary of your workout, and some even come with features such as an alarm clock or integrated Wi-Fi.

Loosen up aching muscles

Foam rollers are great to assist with stretching, and to target specific muscle pain, by rolling the affected area on the roller. It's similar to a massage, but much less intense and a lot cheaper. All you need is an exercise mat and a foam roller. You can purchase both of these things at most sport stores.

Note: please consult your Doctor for specific advice on pre and post operation exercises. Instructions will vary significantly depending on the type of operation, and other factors such as age and strength.

Sportswear and equipment to suit your workout

It's quite common for some of us get stuck with what to wear to the gym, sometimes even to the point where it's a good enough reason not to go. The Damart thermal range proves that you can dress practically and stylishly so you feel confident in yourself whilst exercising.

Damart has over 60 years of experience in the thermals market, and the brand has given a nod towards modernistic and comfortable style with its latest Thermolactyl technology. Damart's thermal options are [graded](#) according to how much warmth they give, and you can choose which level is right for you based on the activity you'll be doing on our [online guide](#).

Equipment

It's completely understandable that some people don't really like the atmosphere of the gym, and feel slightly too intimidated to train in busy public places. It's an easy enough problem to solve though. The best thing to do is to buy a few pieces of fitness equipment (all with different purposes) and set aside a clear area where you can work out at home.

Dumbbell set

A set of dumbbells is an excellent piece of equipment for practising overhead lifting. You can even lie down and do dumbbell exercises from the comfort of an exercise mat. This is especially useful for those that find it difficult to stand for extended periods of time. Depending on your strength, anything between a 1kg and 5kg dumbbell should be ideal. You can test them out in sports stores to find out which weight works best for you.

Exercise mat

A yoga mat is an essential item for a lot of home workouts, and ensures that hard flooring doesn't dig in to your back. For any activity where you need to sit or lie on the floor such as sit-ups or leg raises, you should really use a mat to provide a bit of extra cushioning and comfort. Exercise mats are the perfect accompaniment for yoga and Pilates too.

Kettlebell

A kettlebell is a handy little piece of equipment to have to help you get the most out of your workout. First of all, master your squats and deadlifts and once you feel confident doing some basic exercises using solely bodyweight, you can gradually add in a one or two kg kettlebell to make things harder.

Exercise ball

Exercise balls are the perfect support to assist weighted workouts, or to use purely bodyweight. Some people find it difficult to lower themselves right to the ground, so you can use an exercise ball to do activities such as the plank, crunches, pectoral flies and leg extension.

Resistance bands

Resistance bands have a similar effect as individual weights, but you can bands which are different thicknesses, depending on how hard you want to make a specific exercise. The thicker the band, the more resistance it will give you. Try Damart's [sit and stretch exerciser](#) with adaptable resistance to tone your arms, legs and shoulders.

Mini pedal exerciser

The mini pedal exerciser is an in-house piece of cardio equipment, that's relatively low cost, and small enough to store away beneath a table or sofa. This [mini pedal exerciser](#) from Damart is only £22.00. Use the stepper to train your lower body, and the elastic ropes to train your arms and upper body. As long as you don't mind a bit of multitasking, bicep curls are a simple move that can be done using the stepper and ropes simultaneously.