



5 Fun Ways to

Get Fit and Get Flexible

Flexibility is the range of motion possible at any joint. **Flexibility** is specific to each joint and depends on many factors, including the tightness of ligaments and tendons. **Flexibility** can be improved at any age with fun activities - done at least 1 to 2 times per week. **Flexibility** helps prevent injuries - and puts a younger bounce in your step.

1. YOGA

This 5,000 year old practice offers very modern benefits, especially for flexibility and stress reduction, to bodies of any age. It's best to start with a few classes from a certified yoga instructor, available through yoga centers, fitness clubs, and hospitals. Many DVDs are also available for beginners and those with special needs, such as arthritis and back problems.

2. PILATES

Created by a German gymnast about 100 years ago, Pilates is similar to yoga with a focus on breathing, core strength, and flexibility. Depending on the teacher, Pilates can be a bit more intense and faster paced than yoga. However, many classes today combine aspects of both yoga and Pilates. Always look for a certified instructor for in-person classes or on DVDs.

3. TAI CHI

This centuries old practice from China is beneficial for anyone, whether you are athletic, sedentary, elderly, or have a disability since it can be modified to individual goals. Tai chi improves balance, posture, strength, flexibility, coordination, and concentration. While DVDs and online instructions are available, tai chi is best learned from a certified instructor.

4. DANCE

All types of dance can enhance flexibility. Anything that offers safe, appropriate stretching for joint muscles, tendons, and ligaments is great for gradual improvements in flexibility. Choose the type of dance that fits your rhythm and style. Just make sure that you know the steps or learn from a certified instructor. Injuries are no fun and not good for your flexibility.

5. SWIMMING

If you've already had some significant injuries, especially to your joints, the safest and most effective way to improve flexibility is probably in the water. Pool activities, such as water exercise or water aerobics, provide support for injured, tender, or older joints. However, a certified and experienced instructor is still important to prevent further problems.