



It's Never Too Late To Get Up and Get Moving! Why Exercise Is Important During Retirement

When I read last month that Luke Perry (who played Dylan McKay on Beverly Hills 90210) had passed away as a result of a stroke, I was crushed and shocked. How could this happen? My high school heart throb was gone. And at such a young age!

Luke Perry was only 52 when he suffered a massive stroke. Although strokes of this magnitude are not common at his age, it illustrates that anything can happen, and life can be cut short. I don't know if Luke was a healthy or fit man, but it's a good reminder for everyone, not matter what your age, to look after yourself and your body.

But this information isn't new, we all know this. Every day new articles are published about exercise and weight loss. Even on TV, you can't go five minutes without seeing a commercial trying to sell a new weight loss product or piece of exercise equipment. And what about all those reality shows where contestants work with trainers, for several hours a day, shedding up to hundreds of pounds and after a few months their transformations are quite unbelievable. But that's not reality! Many of us, even in retirement, live busy lives, with children, grandchildren, and other responsibilities and obligations. The challenge for most is trying to fit some physical activity into our daily or weekly routines.

In Canada, close to 8000 people retire each week. In the USA that number is higher, with close to 10,000 people retiring every day. While many may not be able to do the same level of physical activity they did 10 or 20 years ago, retirees are healthier and living on average seven years longer than generations past. With statistics like this, it's even more important that retirees keep moving and continue to be physically fit. We know exercise is good for us at any age and it has significant health benefits, especially for those in their retirement years. The good news is that even a little exercise, just 10 minutes a day can have noteworthy effects on the body.

Here are my five favourite reasons for retirees to get up, get moving and exercise!

1. Exercise is good for the brain. When we exercise, a hormone called **irisin** is released in our bodies. According to a study published in the journal of Nature Medicine, that hormone may help improve brain function, combat memory loss, and reduce the damage done by dementia. In fact, exercise helps reduce the risk of developing dementia. A study published in the Journal

of Alzheimer's Disease, showed that living a sedentary lifestyle in retirement years can actually *increase* the risk of developing dementia. The study analyzed more than 1,600 older adults over five years and found that those who did not exercise were more likely to develop dementia than those who did. Now that's a good incentive to get moving!

2. Exercise can help prevent disease or chronic conditions – According to the National Institute of Aging, regular cardiovascular exercise, such as brisk walking, cycling or light housework – anything that raises the heart rate - will increase blood flow to the heart, boost your overall health and may delay or even prevent diseases like diabetes, cancer, stroke, and heart disease. Exercise can also help alleviate symptoms of depression and improve mood in general.

3. Exercise helps prevent falls and builds bone density. Improving muscle strength and bone density helps improve balance which can lead to a reduction and risk of falling. In fact, the World Health Organization (WHO) states that regular exercise can reduce the risk of having a hip fracture by 40%. Furthermore, weight-bearing exercise such as walking or light jogging can help increase the strength of bones and reduce the risk of developing osteoporosis. That's good news for woman who are at a greater risk for osteoporosis than men. The International Osteoporosis Foundation estimates that osteoporosis affects about 200 million women worldwide.

4. Exercise will help you live longer. Living a sedentary lifestyle is according to WHO, one of the 10 leading causes of death and disability. Even gentle, regular exercise such as walking or swimming, can increase lifespan by around three to five years.

5. Exercise can strengthen social ties. Group exercise such as a walking group, yoga or dance class can also be fun social events. For many retirees, these types of group interactions can add a sense of purpose to their lives and help avoid feelings of loneliness or depression. Group exercise can even increase confidence levels and provide a sense of independence. The key is to find a form of exercise that you love and enjoy the people you are doing it with.

Exercise should not be an option. With all the known benefits that exercise provides, especially living a longer life, why wouldn't you want to exercise? If it is something that is new to you, don't worry, it's not too late to start. Family and friends can be great supporters and offer lots of ideas. If you are working with a retirement coach, he or she too can explore numerous options with you. Even visiting your local community center can provide a listing of many different types of activities. There's bound to be one that is right for you.

So go ahead. What are you waiting for?

Jennifer Rovet is a Certified Professional Retirement Coach and owner of [Retire Ready Canada](#). She wants to live a long healthy life and knows the importance of keeping fit. She is an avid spinner and never misses the opportunity to join a class at her local gym.