

Mobility Check-Up Time

BY DAYNA STODDART



Mobility is defined as the ability to move or walk freely and easily. It is critical for functioning well and living independently. When we were young, we developed the necessary skills to explore and play. Suppleness was just there.

For decades, we moved automatically as needed, and never noticed when these underlying skills started to slip. Why? Because physical tasks were engineered out of our daily lives and we just went with it.

With every decade, exercise or physical activity becomes more and more important in terms of quality of life, independence and vitality. When we shrink our movement sphere, we shrink our function and the more sedentary we become. Use it or lose it! Lose mobility, lose strength, lose energy, lose vitality, lose independence!



Unless our daily routines require a wide variety of movements and positions including a “ground game” (see Health and Wellness Column from Summer 2022 issue), it’s in our best interest to create and choose opportunities to preserve them or work to “earn” them back

Try this mobility check-up:

PLEASE do NOT self-inflict pain or injury just to prove you can do it.

Score Yourself: **YES (1 point):** I did it automatically with ease.

NO: I struggled, felt pain, had to think too much.

I CAN ...

- _____ 1. Breathe deeply and diaphragmatically while moving with good posture and alignment.
- _____ 2. Raise both arms overhead comfortably.
- _____ 3. Rotate my torso and arch my spine.
- _____ 4. Look over my shoulder without turning my entire body.
- _____ 5. Put my pants on standing up.
- _____ 6. Touch my toes with only a slight bend in the knees.
- _____ 7. Settle into a deep squat position with my heels down for 30 seconds.
- _____ 8. Crawl on my belly or all-fours.

Scoring:

GREEN: 8

= holding your own and denying the slide.

YELLOW: 4-7

= some kinks in the chain; have started to slide; reverse course now.

RED: 0-3

= multiple kinks in the chain; it’s never too late to start re-learning; be sure to EASE back in.

Consider a rusty bike that's been sitting outdoors. Do you immediately take it out on the trail for a rough ride? No, you lube it up, work the oil into the movable parts, check the tires and brakes, and test it out, before you hit the trail.

The more time we spend seated, hunched and/or slumped, the more our mobility declines. Our body adapts to what it does or doesn't do.

Much of the usual age-related decline in physical fitness is preventable, and even reversible, through proper attention to our physical activity and exercise levels. To maintain or improve joint health, exercise is key.

Many people with arthritis resist regular physical activity or exercise because they fear it will increase pain or further damage their joints. But the body is supposed to move; our joints allow for movement.

In fact, movement eases joint stiffness, reduces joint pain, strengthens the muscles which surround the joints and helps us maintain a healthy weight. The benefits are real, so keep moving!

Arthritis is characteristically associated with limited range of motion. To preserve your current range of motion or improve it, you should routinely put each joint through its full pain-free range of motion.

To learn more on exercising safely for joint health and mobility, join me weekly for our virtual Arthritis Fitness Fusion class on Mondays at 10:30 a.m. I will guide you through a series of gentle range of motion exercises to reduce joint stiffness and improve mobility and activities of daily living.

Common Sense Solutions:



At HOME...

Do physical labour, chores and tasks both indoors and outdoors. Get down on the ground with pets and kids. If down-sizing, make an effort to keep doing typical physical tasks such as climbing stairs and ladders.



At WORK and sitting in front of a computer screen?

Frequently stand up, walk around, stretch, reach, arch, bend and rotate away from a seated position.



At PLAY...

Get outdoors. Hike, bike, ski, play golf, tennis and pickleball. DO whatever gets your juices flowing.

Consider a DAILY practice of breathing, bending, and rotating into and out of positions that are ignored. Try tai chi, yoga, martial arts and mind/body blends.

"We are only as free as the environments we can move in with confidence and competence."

BE WELL AND THRIVE!