

Strength Training and Older Adults: Tips for Choosing a Fitness Facility

When looking for a fitness or exercise facility in your community, be sure to visit several to find one that meets your needs. If a facility offers a free trial membership or evaluation visits, take advantage of those offerings to make sure the facility is appropriate. In addition to looking for a facility with a convenient location, affordable membership, and gender- or age-specific classes (if important to you), consider the following questions.

Facility and operations

- If you don't drive, does public transportation provide frequent service to the facility?
- Is the facility clean, and are the building and any parking areas well maintained?
- Does the facility have hours of operation that fit your schedule? (For example, is it open early in the morning and late at night?)
- Does the facility offer family memberships or a discount to members over 60?
- If the facility has a swimming pool, is it well maintained and is the water a comfortable temperature?
- Does the facility offer a stretching area?

Staff

- Is the staff easily accessible, and do they answer questions clearly?
- Do staff members have nationally recognized certifications, such as CPR, first aid training, or specialization in older adult fitness?

Programming

- Do activity class descriptions include the level of intensity or difficulty?
- Does the facility offer a free orientation to the programs?
- Does the staff ask about your health history in creating an initial or ongoing individual plan to help you meet your fitness and exercise goals?
- Does the facility offer motivational tools, such as exercise logs, email reminders, or newsletters? Does the facility offer personal coaches?

Equipment

- Is the print on the equipment display panel easy to read and understand?
- Is the equipment (such as treadmills, elliptical trainers, step machines, and bikes) easily adjustable?
- Do the treadmills have handrails, manual starting, variable speeds, and adjustable inclines?
- Does the equipment have wide and comfortable footrests?
- Are there low starting resistance free weights (1-5 pounds) and arm weights that are adjustable in small increments in the lower resistance range?
- Are the weight machines simple to operate, comfortable to get in and out of, and is it easy to determine where to place your hands and feet?
- Can you change the resistance on the weight machines while seated, and do the machines have a low starting resistance?

