

Making Your Fitness Center Comfortable for Members 50+

Many older adults want to be physically active. But older adults who are not used to fitness centers may feel intimidated or uncomfortable going to a facility with equipment and routines that are unfamiliar. Here are a few tips on making your facility senior-friendly.

Staff

- Everyone wants support and encouragement. Make sure staff are welcoming and positive and have a passion for working with older people.
- Ensure personal trainers are certified to work with older adults.
- Provide training on common health issues faced by older adults so that staff are better able to advise clients about beneficial exercises and helpful modifications for those living with chronic conditions.
- Some older adults may be reluctant to take a class taught by someone much younger. They may worry that they can't keep up. A teacher closer in age to the participants may encourage older adults to sign up.

Activities

- Offer classes that may have a special appeal for this age group, such as water aerobics, tai chi, balance, or low-impact strength training.
- Offer classes just for women or just for men.
- If possible, offer classes based on a variety of functional levels, or consider allowing older members to try a certain class for the first time in a more comfortable setting.
- During classes, offer appropriate modifications for those living with chronic conditions.

- You may wish to offer chair classes since many older adults have issues getting down on and up from the floor.

Scheduling

- Provide classes or activities during the middle of the day. Early morning or late afternoon classes may be too crowded or fast-paced.
- An hour-long class may be too much for some older adults. Offer some shorter classes, too.
- Consider offering a yoga class after a strength-training class to add flexibility and relaxation to the routine.

Atmosphere

- Look around your center and listen. How is your center decorated? Is music playing (if so, what kind and how loudly)?
- Does your center feel welcoming to every age group?

VISIT

www.nia.nih.gov/Go4Life

- Print useful tools.
- Order free exercise guides, DVDs, and posters for your locker rooms.



National Institute on Aging

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