

Keep moving with old and new exercise routines

With gyms, swimming pools, and many in-person programs closed during the pandemic, getting exercise has become more challenging – but, of course, it's as important as ever.

Staying active helps us fend off depression, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, arthritis, and more.

We asked some Kaiser Permanente Medicare Advantage members how they've adapted to stay active and fit until social exercise options are available again. Here's what they said.

From walks to weed-whacking

Retirees Bob Jarmick and his wife, Polly Zetterberg, like to walk in their neighborhood for exercise, a routine that precedes the pandemic. "I used to be a long-distance runner, but when my ankles and knees began bothering me I became a long-distance walker, walking an hour or more at a time," Jarmick says.

"Polly and I often walk separately because she likes to walk on mostly level ground, and I like more up and down," he adds. "But we encourage each other to walk and to take good care of ourselves, and walking has helped her heart condition improve dramatically." The couple also takes a virtual Pilates class together.

Grant Hosford, another ex-runner, keeps walking more interesting by focusing on nature and bird watching. "What can I spot on my walks that is familiar and unfamiliar? How can I expand my knowledge of Mother Nature and birds?"

Getting out for a walk is also a good way to connect with your neighbors, says Hosford. "Even if we just say hello, it feels good to see longtime neighbors and welcome new ones."

An interest in photography motivates Tom Morris to do more walking. "If I was just walking for exercise, I probably wouldn't go as far," he says, "but a hobby like photography gets me out and involved with my surroundings. It keeps my mind off feeling tired, so I walk a lot farther."

Walking isn't the only way to work up a sweat outdoors, as our Kaiser Permanente Medicare Advantage members point out. "I rebuilt my deck, weed-whacked my large meadow, and cut down some small trees that had overstayed their welcome," reports one member. Other members mentioned staining and assembling garden planters, weeding and picking up trash at the park, raking leaves, riding bikes, and gardening.

Virtual workouts

While many members miss in-person exercise classes, Silver&Fit®* (see sidebar) and other exercise programs are now online, and members say they're enjoying those options.



Along with walking to stay active, Grant Hosford and his wife, Shelby, enjoy sailing.

"I take one or 2 Silver&Fit exercise classes a week, and an online yoga class," says one member. "I attend online Pilates and barre classes," says another. "The exercise classes I used to attend at my senior center are now online, and I love them."

Other ways to move at home

Have you ever measured the distance from one end of your home to the other, or around the hallways of your retirement community?

One couple did, and they discovered that it was 70 steps across the length of their house. By doing 20 laps, they can walk half a mile a day without leaving their home.

The exercise bands sent to Kaiser Permanente Medicare Advantage members last year are helping Harold and Ruth Jarrell stay active indoors. "I do daily exercises with weights, but my husband wasn't interested in exercising indoors until the bands came," says Ruth. "Now he leads me in exercising every morning. We stretch up and down a dozen times or more in each direction until we get tired."

Home exercise equipment can help fill a gap when fitness centers are closed. "I'm fortunate that we invested in a well-equipped home gym years ago," says one Kaiser Permanente member. "We have weights, a stationary bike, a treadmill, and a rowing machine."

Get fit at home with these classes

If you're a Kaiser Permanente Medicare Advantage (HMO) health plan member, you have access to Silver&Fit* classes and gym memberships, and a new fitness option called ClassPass.

ClassPass gives you access to more than 4,000 on-demand video workouts at no additional cost, plus reduced rates on livestream and in-person fitness classes.

kp.org/wa/member-perks

*The Silver&Fit® program is a federally registered trademark of American Specialty Health, Inc.

But exercise equipment or online resources aren't essential to get you up and moving. "I deep clean and declutter my house," says one member, while others talked about dancing in their desk chair, putting on exercise videos, using a smartwatch to help them meet exercise



Photography has helped Tom Morris enjoy spending more time walking outdoors.

goals, and taking the stairs instead of the elevator in their condo building.

No matter how you go about it, even a little movement can jolt your body out of resting mode and help you thrive during these unusual times. ■

Silver&Fit® offers online video and live-streaming fitness classes and gym memberships. You can also get up to 2 home fitness kits per plan year, as well as a mobile app with activity tracking and the option to stream virtual classes. Members may also view 48 Healthy Aging classes.

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