

Scuba Fitness: Recently retired how do I get started?



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November 21, 2012

“**Question:** *I am a 67 year-old scuba diver, recently retired, and ready to begin an exercise program. I have never exercised before. How do I get started?*

Answer: Your decision to begin an exercise program is exciting!

Meet with a physician. First schedule a medical examination and discuss your plans with your physician. Your doctor will know what tests, if any, are appropriate at this time. Then make an appointment with a fitness professional to evaluate what type of exercise is right for you. During your appointment you should expect and receive a thorough assessment, fitness and flexibility tests, an

interview, and forms such as a health questionnaire. Be sure to share your fitness goal's and the results from your physician's examination with the fitness professional.

Get moving. Walking daily is a great way to begin an exercise program. Since you are retired, you can easily create your own schedule. Choose exercise activities you enjoy, schedule exercise at your best time of day and make it convenient to your home.

Try something new and different. Try new fitness activities such as weight training, yoga, swimming or golf. Just participate at your ability and fitness level and progress from there. Remember, daily activities such as gardening also contribute to an active lifestyle.

Take a class. Especially if you have any physical or medical limitations, take a class where exercise is supervised. Classes are also a great way to get to know others with similar goals. Examples include the **Arthritis Foundation PACE** (People with Arthritis Can Exercise) class or indoor cycling.

Learn more about exercise. It may be helpful to purchase a book about fitness with sample exercises. **Bill Pearl** is someone who has "aged to perfection" and has co-authored a number of excellent books, such as **Getting Back in Shape**.

Here is an excerpt from my **ScubaFit®** Diver Course:

Dive fitness in the 60's and 70's. Eventually, the effects of aging begin to manifest to some degree regardless of a fitness lifestyle, but biological health varies greatly among divers. Many are healthier now than they were in their 50's and with more free time after retirement enjoying life becomes very important. Physical activity is often motivated by and achieved through hobbies such as gardening, dancing and golf. During the 60's divers require structured exercise in addition to other forms of physical activity to continue the safest and most pleasurable diving activity. Consistency is more important than intensity and preventing injury is important because setbacks may require a longer recovery greatly compromising quality of life. Moderate total body workouts including aerobic exercise, strength training and stretching are recommended three times each week in addition to fitness hobbies.

Chronologically speaking, with increasing age, body activity diminishes and at individual milestones maintaining daily activities becomes the best indicator of physical fitness. However, a fitness lifestyle establishes physical reserve; a combination of healthy habits and spontaneous responses of physical activity. In the 70's and beyond, workouts may include programs for divers with arthritis, stretching programs are directed toward preventing falls and injury, and mind body exercise such as tai chi becomes especially beneficial. Biological health (not chronological health) dictates almost everything including diving activity and, as always, decisions about diving are best made with the advice of a physician. Divers in their 70's are most likely those with high physical reserve and very good biological health younger than their years.

