

BIODEX

How to Attract Seniors with Wellness Exercise

TIPS & TACTICS



CONTENTS

3 GROWING PAINS OF AN AGING POPULATION: A HEALTHCARE CONUNDRUM

4 THE ROLE OF THE WELLNESS CENTER: EXERCISE OFFERINGS AND BEYOND

- Overall Health and Disease or Injury Prevention
- Accessibility
- Social Engagement

8 TIPS FOR ATTRACTING SENIORS TO YOUR FACILITY: EQUIPMENT, CLASSES AND PROGRAMS

- Senior Outreach Efforts
- Staff and Support Education
- Senior-Appropriate Equipment
- Senior-Focused Classes

13 CONCLUSION

14 SOURCES



Growing Pains of an Aging Population

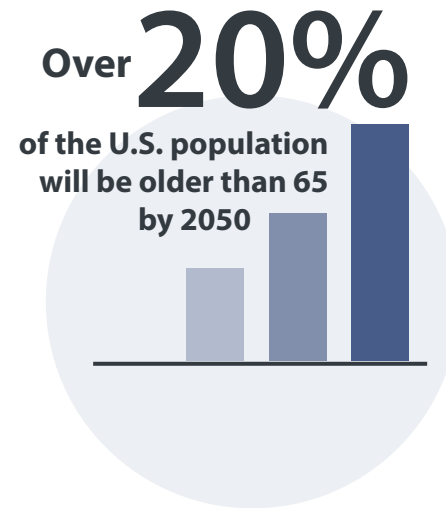
A HEALTHCARE CONUNDRUM

By 2050, more than 20% of the American population will be older than 65, according to the [United States Census Bureau](#). The fact that people are living longer indicates wonderful advances in social, medical and economic efforts.

But this reality also comes with its own unique set of challenges.

For instance: older adults are at greater risk for chronic health problems, and a majority of healthcare spending is put toward managing this population's needs. Alzheimer's care alone is expected to cost upwards of [\\$1 trillion annually](#). Right now the US government pays for about [65% of all medical expenses](#) for older adults—a population that's only getting bigger.

With the ever-changing face of the healthcare system and the shifting demographics of this nation, new resources which will help seniors stay healthy and manage chronic disease are more essential than ever. Community wellness centers that can understand and accommodate the needs and challenges of older adults stand to see substantial growth in memberships.



The Role of the Wellness Center

EXERCISE OFFERINGS AND BEYOND

The local community wellness center can support older adults by addressing at least three key needs: overall health and disease prevention; accessibility to wellness services; and social engagement.

Overall Health and Disease or Injury Prevention

Senior-appropriate exercise programs at community facilities can help older adults improve strength, range of motion, balance, coordination and other essential physical skills necessary for maximizing functional independence. Regular exercise has also been shown to improve or help manage many chronic diseases currently faced by millions of older adults. Regular exercise has even been correlated with a decreased risk of certain types of [cancer](#)!

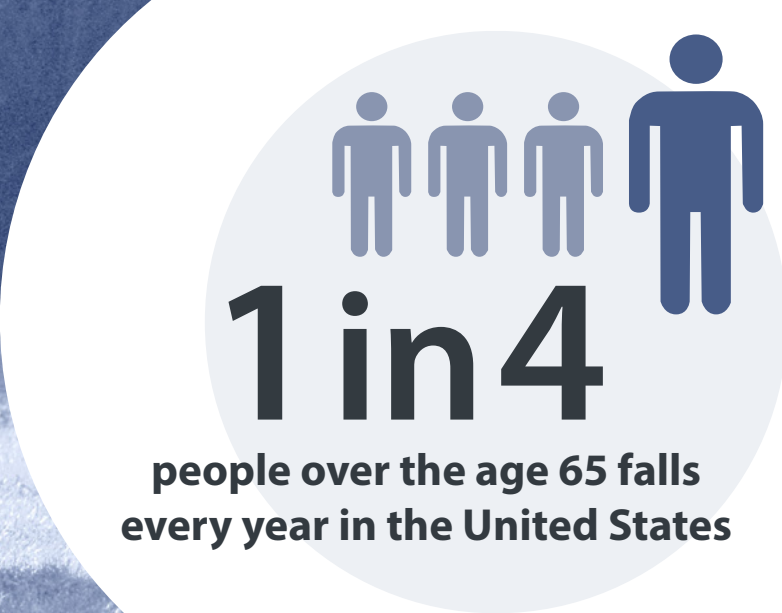
Some of the most common conditions you may see in your older clientele include:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes
- Osteoarthritis
- Parkinson's disease





Disease and injury prevention is especially important when it comes to age-related frailty. Approximately one in four people over the age 65 falls every year in the United States. This is typically due to a combination of factors, including increased sedentary behavior, weakness, dehydration, and medication side effects. By 2020, the estimated annual cost of falling events among seniors is expected to total more than \$67 billion. Encouraging seniors to participate in exercise at their local wellness center may help reduce this astounding number.



Accessibility

If a senior citizen wants to pursue medical fitness outside the realm of insurance-based therapy services, community wellness centers may help bridge the gap.

Resources such as physical therapy and occupational therapy can be essential for an older adult with chronic illness. But these skilled services are not intended to be continued indefinitely. In general, if a patient meets their stated goals, achieves their highest practical level of function, or has entered a so-called “maintenance” phase, insurance will probably not reimburse for continued services.

Plus, many older adults run out of their Medicare benefits over the course of their care, and the out-of-pocket costs for skilled therapy can become inhibitive—as well as a major source of stress.

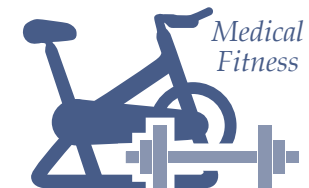
As we know, regular exercise is essential to maintaining and promoting an active lifestyle, as well as preventing future health complications. To this end, health services offered through community wellness centers may be an affordable and feasible option in addition to skilled therapy, especially when a person cannot continue working with a physical or occupational therapist.

In addition to cost, other potential barriers to access of wellness care for older adults include lack of transportation, lack of social support, lack of professional guidance, lack of information, and feeling unwell, too tired, or too depressed to participate.

Health services offered through community wellness centers may be an affordable and feasible option.



Wellness centers help
bridge
the **gap**



Socializing and participating in meaningful activities has been shown to reduce symptoms of depression.

Social Engagement

Depression isn't a "normal" part of aging. But about 2 million adults aged 65 and older are living with it. Community wellness centers have the potential to provide older adults with a steadier resource of social engagement. This is essential, because socializing and participating in meaningful activities has been shown to reduce symptoms of depression.

And compared to senior centers, where there may be less emphasis on physical activity, wellness facilities are equipped to offer socialization in the context of exercise.



Tips for Attracting Seniors to Your Facility

EQUIPMENT, CLASSES AND PROGRAMS

Implementing programs that appeal directly to seniors can help increase engagement and retention. The following tips may help local wellness centers reach more seniors within their community:

Senior Outreach Efforts

Exercise and social engagement is so important for seniors. But because of the barriers we have already seen, it can be hard for many older adults living in your community to actually get to your wellness center (or even know about its existence).



Here are some possible tasks for your to-do list to remove some of these barriers:

Contact local or online support groups for people with specific health conditions.

There are even support groups for caregivers. Many are legal guardians of local seniors and are instrumental in making day-to-day decisions about their activities and care.



Go where the seniors go!

Post informational fliers in senior centers, places of worship, grocery stores, doctor's offices, pharmacies, libraries and other local establishments.

Increase your engagement on social media.

With permission, post and tag photos of community members who represent the senior population.



Encourage staff members to volunteer.

Volunteering at local hospitals and nursing homes will increase face-to-face contact with seniors.

Post ads in local newspapers or on radio stations.

This can help you reach seniors who have limited access to or familiarity with the Internet.



Host events at your wellness center.

Events such as book drives, blood drives, toy drives and clothing drives can help you promote increased community engagement overall.

What type of information should you share through these outreach efforts?

The following topics are a great place to start:

- Low-cost transportation services for seniors
- Free health and fall risk screenings
- Current and new senior wellness programs offered through your facility
- Hours and location of your community wellness center
- Special offers, promotions and events

You may also offer fast facts on the benefits of exercise—consider the physical, mental and even financial benefits. For instance, research from the [American Heart Association](#) shows that routine physical activity can reduce a person's medical costs!



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Staff and Support Education

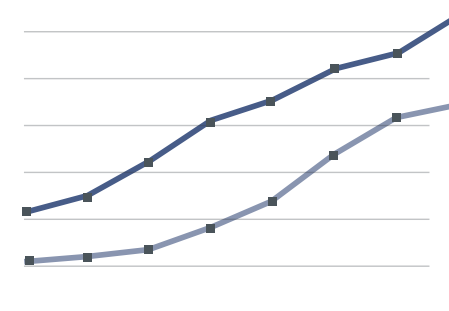
Staff members should be encouraged to learn about conditions affecting older adults. It's also helpful to raise staff awareness about specific barriers this population may face. Researchers, doctors, therapists and other experts in the geriatric field may be willing to come speak to your staff as part of an ongoing education effort.

Topics you may want to cover include:

- Disease-specific information, such as for Parkinson's or stroke
- Exercises targeting balance issues and fall risk
- Senior-specific technology training
- Strategies for effective communication (especially with people with cognitive impairments like dementia)

With the increasing rate of [Parkinson's](#) and [stroke](#) diagnoses in the U.S., many facilities select equipment designed with functions that may help mitigate symptoms of a movement disorder.

Training staff about this equipment and the benefits of certain exercises will help attract this growing population of seniors, and keep them coming to your facility.



Senior-Appropriate Equipment

Modern technology has helped streamline communication between healthcare providers and improve diagnostic accuracy. Technological advances have also made many types of exercise safer and easier to modify for the individual user. Investing in senior-appropriate equipment can be a great way to encourage more older adults to come to your facility on a regular basis, and keep them safer.

What does senior-appropriate equipment look like? Ideally, you want devices that are:

- Simple to use
- Easy to set up and adjust (less intimidating)
- Low impact and easy on the joints while still promoting healthy weight-bearing activities
- Able to use while in a seated or recumbent position
- Effective for improving overall strength, balance, coordination and function

For example, devices such as a [seated elliptical](#), [powered ergometer](#) and [squat-assist trainer](#) are low impact, fully adjustable and can reduce the risk of injury compared to other types of exercise equipment. If space permits, you may want to place these devices in a specific area of your facility to increase visibility and reduce the “intimidation” factor commonly associated with free weight areas.



Investing in senior-appropriate equipment can be a great way to encourage more older adults to come to your facility on a regular basis, and keep them safer.

Senior-Focused Classes

Group exercise classes specifically geared toward seniors can help older adults exercise safely and engage with their peers in a meaningful and enjoyable environment. Suggestions for senior-friendly classes include:

- Chair yoga
- Tai Chi
- Walking programs
- Meditation and mindfulness training
- Dance classes
- Swim aerobic classes
- Boxing or cycling for Parkinson's

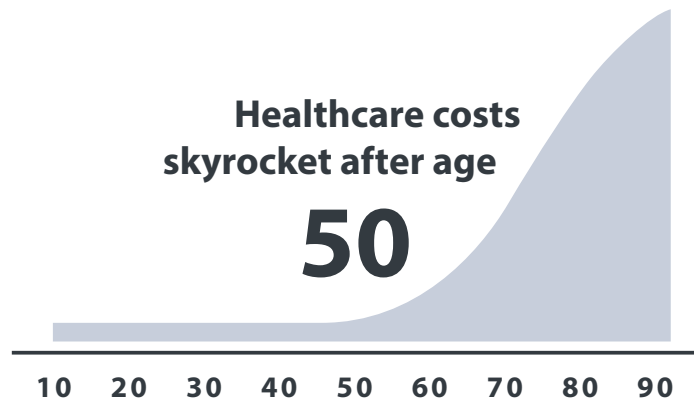
Keep in mind that some seniors may require more one-on-one attention due to personal preference, cognition, physical conditions or other factors. A wellness center can accommodate this potential reality by assigning specific staff members to help the senior clientele, recruiting volunteers, keeping class sizes smaller, encouraging family members to participate and offering personal training sessions.

The personal training staff at community wellness centers can also help seniors develop individualized home exercise programs to increase their amount of physical activity overall.



Conclusion

According to projections from the [United States Census Bureau](#), older adults will outnumber children by the year 2030. [Research also indicates](#) that healthcare costs skyrocket once a person reaches age 50, [doubling between the ages of 70 and 90](#).



Community wellness centers are poised to be a helpful resource to address this new demographic challenge.

Realize that seniors living in your community are a large and growing group of people. By implementing senior-friendly programs and services at your wellness facility will help you tap into that market and grow your business. You'll also be helping a significant percentage of the population stay more active, engaged and healthy at every stage of life.



With more than 60 years of service, Biodex Medical Systems, Inc. provides innovative technology solutions and support to medical and wellness facilities on a global scale.

To begin implementing more senior-appropriate programs and services within your community wellness center, [contact us](#).

BIODEX

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