

Exercise and diet essential for healthy aging

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Credit: Örebro Universitet

Resistance training combined with a healthy diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids helps older women bring about gains in strength and mobility. That is researcher Peter Edholm's conclusion in his thesis, which also shows exercise in middle age is linked to healthy aging.

Peter Edholm has a Ph.D. in [exercise physiology](#) at Örebro University. In his thesis, he studied the effects of exercise, training and diet in older women. Results show a distinct correlation between good exercise habits and high physical function.

"That applies regardless of your exercising habits earlier in life, which supports the old adage it's never too late to start working out."

After physical activity been accounted for, the study found no association between a [sedentary lifestyle](#) and functional performance, indicating that it is not a sedentary lifestyle that is harmful, but rather the lack of physical activity.

"This is the opposite of what usually is presented in the media today. Therefore, the focus should be on increasing the length of physical activity, such as

brisk walks, rather than reducing the time that you're sitting still," explains Peter Edholm.

The years 50–65 are important

Women who were physically active at a younger age have larger muscle mass and higher physical function even later in life. The previous physical activity also benefited them if they became inactive later in life. The study also showed that exercise between the ages of 50–65 had the most significant impact.

"So a high level of [physical activity](#) in middle age can partially protect us from the negative effects on physical function and muscle mass from a sedentary lifestyle later in life. Best, of course, is being active throughout life."

Peter Edholm's research also shows that exercise, combined with a [healthy diet](#), rich in omega-3 [fatty acids](#), produces a more significant effect. Both in regards to explosive muscle strength, physical function and the ability to build muscle mass.

"The conclusion is that [older women](#) should exercise with resistance training twice weekly, while also thinking about what they eat to get the most effect out of their exercise. And the older you are, the more important your diet is," he says.

More information: Peter Edholm, "[Muscle mass and physical function in ageing: the effects of physical activity and healthy diet.](#)"

Provided by Örebro Universitet

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