

## THE BOOMER SHIFT

# Adopt a 'use it or lose it' mentality to maintain flexibility

**DR. DWIGHT CHAPIN**  
**HEALTH ADVISOR**

As we age, our muscles begin to shrink and lose mass. The water content of our tendons and the bungee-cord-like connections between our muscles and bones also decrease. This makes our bodies stiffer and less able to tolerate stress and can leave us feeling as though our peak physical performance is a thing of the past. Unfortunately, there is no hiding from this natural process.

Tell the average baby boomer this and they will probably want to prove you wrong.

Baby boomers are standing in opposition to the general acceptance of a decline in physical health as an inevitable part of aging. In the process, they are redefining how we are growing older.

Whether on the tennis court or on an adventure travel expedition with their grandchildren, they are demanding more from their bodies and expecting more from retirement.

I applaud this approach when applied with appropriate consideration. Adjust to changes in your ability, not the number of candles on your birthday cake.

Most rehabilitation experts will agree that the body is made for motion. Use it or lose it.

Find opportunities to move and your body will age differently. Every step helps. Living an active lifestyle will help you to reduce muscle loss while maintaining your stamina, strength, balance, range of motion and, yes, flexibility.

However, to fully embrace this philosophy without injury takes some planning and recognition of the physical limits of your body.

To ensure flexibility gains, here are some answers to common questions.

### How often should I stretch?

Practise full-body flexibility exercises (stretches, yoga or tai



Practising full-body flexibility exercises a few times a week helps prevent muscle loss. ISTOCK

chi) for all major muscle groups at least three times a week. Consult your team of health professionals before beginning a stretching routine. Ask them to design a custom program with an appropriate starting point based on your age and fitness level.

### Which is better – static or dynamic stretching?

Regardless of how you stretch, always warm up the target muscle first.

Static stretches ask you to hold a position of a joint while focusing on relaxing the muscle being stretched. Research suggests that stretching cold, prior to activity, may actually inhibit the muscle's ability to fire and possibly increase the risk of injury.

For that reason, pre-activity stretching favours dynamic movement. Dynamic stretches

are designed to take a joint through a challenging and repetitive motion, moving a body part farther with each repetition.

For example, try a leg swing pendulum exercise. Stand sideways next to a wall and swing your outside leg forward and back, increasing the height each time.

The time for static stretching is after activity.

### How long should you hold a stretch?

For optimal results, spend a total of 60 seconds on each stretch. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds, repeating two or three times to reach the 60-second target. Stretch both sides.

### Should stretching hurt?

No. Stretch only to the point of mild tension, never to the point of pain. If a stretch hurts, stop.

With time and practice, your flexibility will improve. If you have to hold your breath during the stretch, you are going too far.

### Should I stretch if I have osteoarthritis?

If movement is painful, it is nat-

ural to want to limit it. However, avoid movement of an arthritic joint and your stiffness will worsen. Movement is instrumental in alleviating arthritis pain. Exercise is one of the most commonly prescribed treatments for arthritis.

Practise the two-hour rule: If discomfort after stretching lasts longer than two hours or is more severe than your usual pain, ease up. Try doing fewer repetitions or hold stretches for a shorter duration. With progress, gradually step it up again. Osteoarthritis of the hip or knee responds well to activities performed in a heated pool such as an aqua-fit class offered at a community centre.

### Things to remember ...

Warm up first. Pay attention to posture and good form. One side of your body is often tighter than the other, so work on balance. Breathe comfortably while stretching. Practise often.

Incorporating daily stretching into your routine requires some patience. A slow and steady approach will produce more favourable results.

Dr. Dwight Chapin is the clinic director of High Point Wellness Centre in Mississauga, team chiropractor for the CFL's Toronto Argonauts and on-site clinician for employees of The Globe and Mail. Follow him on Twitter @HighPtWellness.

### TODAY'S SUDOKU SOLUTION

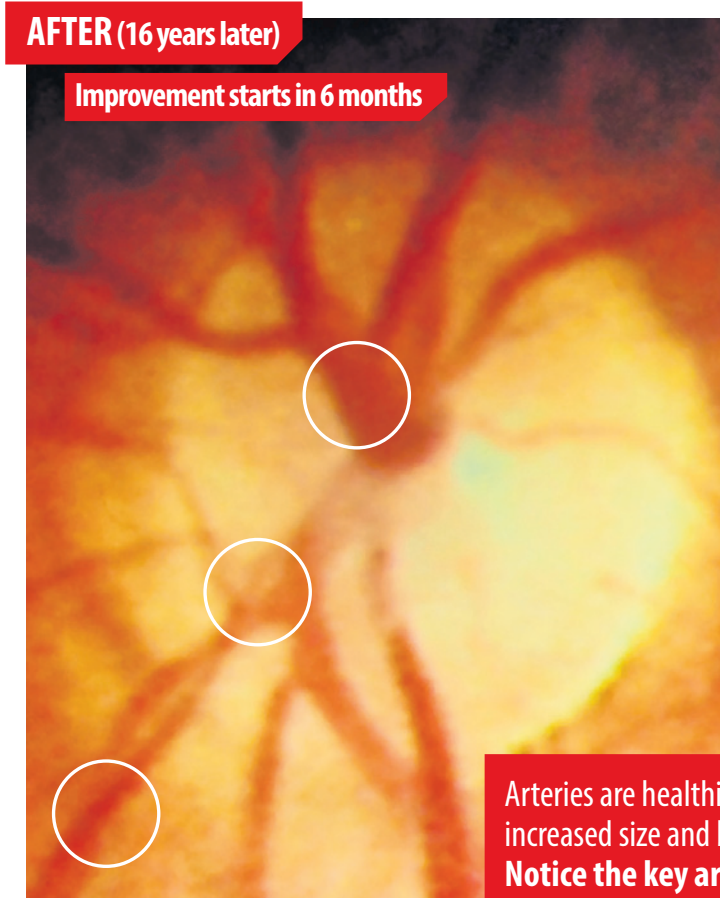
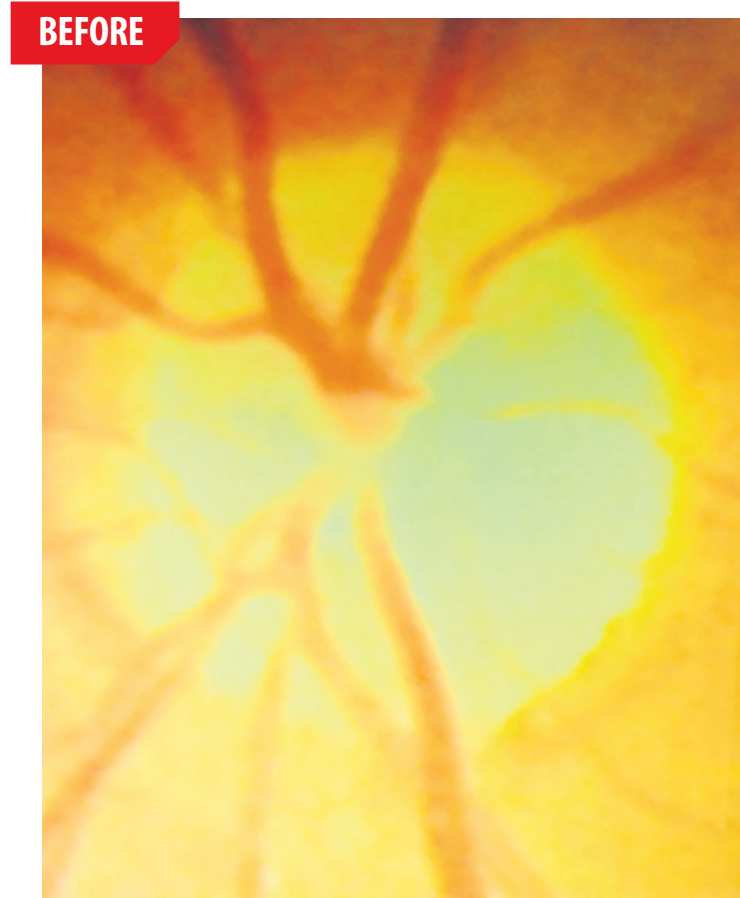
3	4	8	1	7	2	6	5	9
1	6	5	3	9	8	4	2	7
2	9	7	5	4	6	8	1	3
8	1	2	6	3	7	5	9	4
4	5	6	9	2	1	3	7	8
7	3	9	8	5	4	2	6	1
9	8	4	2	1	5	7	3	6
5	7	1	4	6	3	9	8	2
6	2	3	7	8	9	1	4	5

### TODAY'S KENKEN SOLUTION

3	5	4	6	1	2
5	4	6	3	2	1
1	6	3	2	4	5
6	2	5	1	3	4
2	3	1	4	5	6
4	1	2	5	6	3

Advertisement

# Which Coronary Arteries Would You Prefer?



Arteries are healthier; with increased size and blood flow  
Notice the key areas

## Remarkable Results of a Person That Has Taken High Doses of Vitamin C and Lysine

**W. GIFFORD-JONES, MD**

Studies show atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) starts to disappear after taking **Medi-C Plus™** (high dose vitamin C and lysine) for six months.

Millions of North Americans die after heart attack and kidney failure due to atherosclerosis. Others lose legs or go blind because of poor blood supply. And millions of patients with diabetes, notorious for causing atherosclerosis, are unaware **Medi-C Plus** can help to prevent these horrific complications.

**Medi-C Plus** is a safe and effective natural remedy to fight atherosclerosis without the many complications of cholesterol-lowering drugs.

History will show it's tragic that this research is being totally ignored by the medical establishment



Available Exclusively at Health Food Retailers and Specialty Pharmacies

FOR STORE LOCATOR  
**PNO.CA**

Sign up for **FREE** health tips at **DOCGIFF.COM**

@GiffordJonesMD

