



# Health And Fitness

## 7 Reasons to Get Started with Your Fitness Program

(NAPS)—Because physical activity and healthy aging go hand in hand, getting started with a fitness program included in your health plan can do more than help you maintain your health as you age.

“Movement truly is medicine,” says Dr. Jaynie Bjornaraa, physical therapist, fitness professional, adjunct professor, and senior vice president of rehabilitation services and digital fitness solutions at American Specialty Health (ASH).

Dr. Bjornaraa oversees the Silver&Fit Healthy Aging and Exercise program for ASH, ensuring that its members get evidence-based recommendations when starting their fitness routines. She helped develop the program’s onboarding feature, which sets members on individual fitness journeys based on their needs. Fitness levels, exercise goals, and personal preferences all factor into a tailored 14-day workout plan.

“Research has shown that active movement is the best way to prevent and improve chronic disease. And the great thing about exercise is that it benefits your cognitive health—memory and mood—as much as it affects your physical well-being,” according to Dr. Bjornaraa.

She offers this short list of other benefits a thoughtful fitness program can provide:

**1. Improved Health** Being physically active can reduce your risk of disease, strengthen your bones and muscles, help you manage weight, and boost your mental well-being.

**2. Preventive Care** Physical fitness can help prevent certain high-risk scenarios such as serious injury from falls, which is the leading cause of accidental death in older adults.

**3. Social Interaction** Some programs offer links to connect with clubs and free group fitness classes online for various types and levels of workouts.

**4. Health Rewards** Incentives for tracking your activity through a fitness program can earn various awards as well help you work with your medical provider to better manage any chronic disease.



**It’s not a stretch of the imagination: Regular exercise can help your mental as well as your physical health.**

**5. Personal Coaching** Connecting with a health coach during regularly scheduled sessions through a fitness-focused plan can help you achieve a variety of wellness goals.

**6. Cost Savings** Fitness-focused plans often include low-cost access to fitness centers and exercise videos for a wider variety of workout choices.

**7. Quality of Life** A thoughtfully designed program will help members develop a workout plan, which can help you stay mobile and maintain their independence.

Even for individuals who don’t currently engage in fitness activities, Dr. Bjornaraa says it’s never too late to start.

“You can be 80 years old,” she said. “Whenever you decide to start an exercise routine, you’ll notice the health improvements quickly add up. However, starting slow and staying consistent is the key to building fitness levels and a good program can help you steadily reach your goals.”

It’s important that your health plan supports your long-term health—and fitness. If you’re considering adding fitness to your routine, be sure to work with doctors before starting any new exercise regimen.

Finally, once you’ve started a fitness plan, make the most of it. Stay committed to a lifestyle of fitness. Regular attendance in exercise classes and engaging in your wellness will go a long way to help you maintain and improve your health.