

[IMAGE]

Don't Be a Stiff...Have a Heart and Exercise

Did you know that as we age our heart muscles can stiffen? This stiffening of the muscle causes pressure that in turn resists blood flow into the heart. As a result, the heart's main pumping chamber, the left ventricle, cannot pump blood throughout the body in a normal capacity, and this can eventually lead to complete diastolic heart failure.

Researchers from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas compared the function of the left ventricle in 12 healthy but sedentary senior citizens, 12 senior Masters athletes, and 12 young, sedentary adults (average age 29) to determine if aging was the primary cause of left ventricle failure, or if physical inactivity was also partly to blame.

Researchers found that sedentary hearts were stiffer than those of the Master athletes; moreover, the function of the athletes' hearts was virtually the same as that of the younger study participants - something that came as a surprise to the researchers. "We found that older, sedentary individuals' hearts were 50 percent stiffer than the Masters athletes, which we expected," said one of the researchers Benjamin Levin, MD, professor of internal medicine at the university. "What we didn't expect was that the hearts of these senior athletes were indistinguishable from those of the healthy younger participants."

The moral of the story here is obvious: Exercise can keep the heart muscle from stiffening, which means a decreased risk of heart failure and overall better health. But this shouldn't be your only reason for exercising. Regular exercise boosts mood, decreases stress, and keeps joints and muscles limber--all important aspects to maintaining health into the golden years. And remember to make routine chiropractic care a part of your health regimen.

Reference:

Zadeh AA, Dijk E, Prasad A, et al. Effect of aging and physical activity on left ventricle compliance. *Circulation* 2004; 110:1799-1805.

For additional information on sports and fitness, go to
<http://www.chiroweb.com/find/tellmeabout/sports.html>

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