What Seniors Want You to Know

Age-Related Medical Conditions

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Chapter 4
First Things, First.....

- Review each participant registration form

- After you learn participants’ names, check forms to learn their medical conditions

- Participants are trusting you with confidential information: use it wisely

- Recognize how the exercise classes are improving participants’ physical function
What Seniors Want You to Know

- Older adults are generally good at “self-limiting”
- They are aware of their own medical conditions
- They are more likely not come to class when they could, rather than attend when they shouldn’t
Age-Related Medical Conditions

Cardiovascular Diseases

**Congestive Heart Failure:** heart cannot pump blood fast enough for strenuous exercise. Regular exercise usually prescribed for these patients.

**Angina:** pain on exercise – a symptom of decreased blood flow to the heart

(should have activity plan from MD)
Age-Related Medical Conditions

**Hypertension**: BP > 140/90

affects 50% of Americans over age 65

Weights: high number of reps, low resistance

**Stroke**: → weakness/paralysis of one or more limbs

on one side of body.

Find out exact deficits on enrollment.

Expect slow progress
Age-Related Medical Conditions

**History of Blood Clots** – blood that has turned from liquid into solid (thrombus)

**Atrial Fibrillation** – two upper chambers of the heart beat rapidly and arrhythmically

Symptoms: palpitations, dizziness and confusion

Check for anti-coagulant medication. If they sustain a cut they will bleed excessively
Age-Related Medical Conditions

Cardiovascular Disorders

Guidelines

- Ideally – MD’s permission to exercise
- Remind participants to take their meds regularly and bring extra with them in case they forget to take it earlier
- No large meals before exercise
- Regularly check level of exertion during class
- If participant develops chest pain, shortness of breath or dizziness – stop immediately
Age-Related Medical Conditions

Respiratory Disorders

3 most common in older adults:

- Asthma
- Bronchitis
- Emphysema/COPD:

  chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
Age-Related Medical Conditions

Asthma – airways become narrow, making it difficult to breathe. Make sure they always bring inhaler to class.


Emphysema/COPD – air sacs in lungs become stretched and enlarged.
  Symptoms: shortness of breath and persistent cough.
Age-Related Medical Conditions

Respiratory Disorders

Guidelines

- Begin exercise at low intensity
- Watch out for shortness of breath
- Extra help with breathing techniques during exercise
- May need to rest frequently during class
- Some conditions worsen in cold weather
- Exercise improves health, but expect ability to be limited.
Age-Related Medical Conditions

**Arthritis:** regular exercise is required in OA. When suffering from a “joint flare” avoid exercising that joint and ↓weight used in strength training.

Monitor pain during exercise.

**Joint Replacement:** fairly common in seniors. If recent (less than 1 year) – Participant should follow instructions from MD/PT (make sure you have an understanding of this as well)
**Age-Related Medical Conditions**

**Osteoporosis:** strength training builds and maintains bone mass. Start with very low weights.

**Back Pain:** most people with back pain benefit from regular exercise. Start very slowly and gently. If persistent, refer to PT for specific back exercise guidelines.
Age-Related Medical Conditions

Diabetes

- Diabetes mellitus ➤ high blood sugar level
- Insulin lowers the blood sugar level
- Hypoglycemic attack = blood sugar level too low need sugary food or drinks
- Diabetics taught to recognize and self-treat
- Doses and timing of meds should be coordinated before exercise, ↓ dose of drugs
- Participant should collaborate with physician

Exercise lowers blood sugar level!
Age-Related Medical Conditions

Diabetes

Guidelines

- Instructors – be aware of diabetics in class
  possibility of “hypo” attacks
- Attacks come on quietly and quickly
- Main symptom – confusion

Action: immediate sugary drink/snack if not resolved in 5-10 mins call 911 → ER
Age-Related Medical Conditions

Diabetes

Guidelines

• Speak to diabetics individually:
  each hypo attack is unique and each requirement is unique

• “What happens when you have an attack?”

• “What should I do for you if you have an attack?”

• Remind diabetics to eat before class and to always have a snack with them
Age-Related Medical Conditions

General

**Obesity**: will benefit from regular exercise

**Visual disorders**: help with placement and weights at beginning of class

**Hearing disorders**: place near front, demonstrate exercises clearly

**Urinary incontinence**: Participants may have to quickly leave during class
Age-Related Medical Conditions

Balance problems

- May be due to vestibular disorder, i.e. Menieres.
- Some types of dizziness benefit from physical activity. Encourage participant to work through gentle dizziness, but to stop when necessary.
- Have they consulted their MD/PT?
Age-Related Medical Conditions

Parkinson’s Disease

- Tremor, slow movements, shuffling gait, poor balance, rigidity.
- High fall risk due to balance decline
- Look out for fluctuations in severity of symptoms.
Age-Related Medical Conditions

Summary

- Know your participants
- Remind them to tell you of any health changes
- Be especially aware of:
  - Heart attack
  - Angina
  - Asthma
  - Diabetes
- Where is the telephone, water supply, snacks and assistance if needed?
- What are the procedures at your facility?
Thank you