



Boosting the Health and Fitness of Baby Boomers in the Workforce

“Sixty is the new 40,” say many first-born baby boomers celebrating their 60th birthday this year. This generation of 76 million people born between 1946 and 1964, determined to ward off aging, has focused more on exercise and wellness than did their parents. They were at the forefront of the aerobics and fitness movement that began in the 1970s and are now flocking to health clubs in even greater numbers.

Gym membership for boomers rose 135% between 1987 and 2001, according to American Sports Data, Inc.¹ But now “boomeritis” – the phenomenon of boomers becoming injured while exercising and playing sports at a level often too intense for their aging bodies – is increasing healthcare costs for employers and insurers.

Bureau of Labor Statistics.² When the Consumer Product Safety Commission examined emergency-room visits in 1998, it discovered that sports-related injuries to baby boomers had risen by 33% since 1991 and amounted to \$18.7 billion in medical costs.³

Chronic conditions more prevalent with age

Despite efforts to defy the clock, boomers enter middle age with more pounds and higher blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol than previous generations, putting them at risk for chronic conditions and serious illnesses. Nearly 75% of older Americans are overweight and more than 33% are obese, compared to less than 20% forty years ago.⁴

Discovery

Athletic injuries common to boomers

Head
Head trauma frequently occurs when bicyclist don't wear helmets.

Shoulder
Overhead sports such as tennis and volleyball can cause strain or impingement, which happens when the shoulder blade rubs against muscles and tendons.

Elbow
Racket sports frequently cause tennis elbow, a painful irritation of the tendons on the forearm muscles that results from repetitive stress.

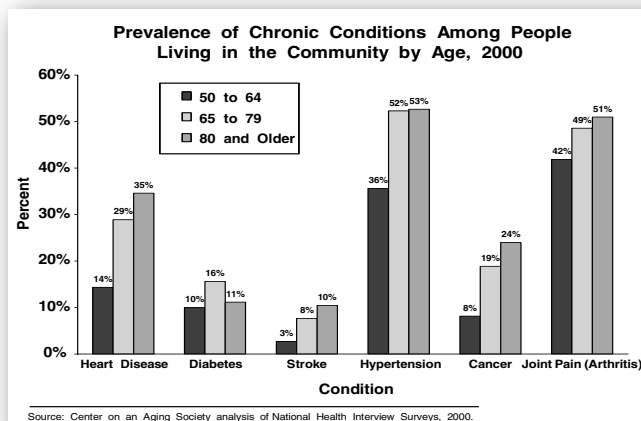
Back
Uneven surfaces in beach volleyball frequently cause lower back pain in the sacroiliac joints.

Calif
Jumping in volleyball and basketball strains the calf muscles.

Knee
Tennis, volleyball, running, softball and baseball frequently result in a variety of knee problems, such as strains, twists, bursitis and the more serious cartilage and ligament tears.

Achilles tendon
Often called tennis leg, a partial or complete tearing of the connection between the calf muscle and the Achilles tendon results from lunging or pushing off.

SOURCE: American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons PAUL PENZELLA / Copley News Service



Infirmities associated with the athletic activities of middle-aged adults were the source of 488 million days of restricted work in 2002, according to a study by the

Chronic conditions, which account for nearly 75% of total healthcare expenditures, take a toll on employers not only with absenteeism, but with presenteeism – the expense of on-the-job productivity losses which account for poor quality of work and reduced work capacity or output.⁵

Staying healthy and avoiding injuries

Regular exercise has been shown to both prevent and improve chronic conditions affecting the middle-aged

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population, but modifications may be necessary if this age group is to avoid injuries.

PTPN rehabilitation therapists – experienced in implementing wellness and fitness programs at the workplace and in their PT offices – have the specialized training necessary to assess problems, adapt exercise movements to individual needs, and promote strength, endurance and flexibility.

To help fight aging and avoid injuries, PTPN providers offer the following suggestions to boomers:

- Exercise at a pace appropriate for your age. Moderate your activities and know that you have limitations: You may only be able to get your heart rate up so high, you may have joints that are not as flexible, or you may have arthritis.
- Seek the advice of physical therapists to work on your flexibility, strength, endurance and posture. You need to know what posture to have while sitting at a computer, as well as how to set your computer station ergonomically, to reduce the risk of neck, shoulder and hand injuries.

- Wear shoes and do exercises that can improve balance and prevent falls. Physical therapy can be helpful in enhancing balance and fall prevention.
- Eat well-balanced meals with protein at each meal, including plenty of fruits and vegetables. Drink eight glasses of water daily.

For a complete list of suggestions for staying healthy and avoiding injuries, contact Stephen Moore at smoore@ptpn.com or 800-766-PTPN.

1 "A Comprehensive Study of Sports Injuries in the United States," American Sports Data, Inc., June 2003.
2 Pennington, Bill. "Baby Boomers Stay Active, and So Do Their Doctors," New York Times, April 16, 2006.
3 "Baby Boomer Sports Injuries," Consumer Product Safety Review, Spring 2000.
4 "Older Americans 2004: Key Indicators of Well-Being," Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, November 2004.
5 Hoffman C, Rice D, Sung HY. "Persons With Chronic Diseases: Their Prevalence and Costs," Journal of the American Medical Association, 1996; 276:1473-1479.

This information is provided by PTPN, the nation's first and largest outpatient rehabilitation network. All PTPN providers must be independent practitioners who own their own practices. PTPN's network includes more than 1,200 therapist offices throughout the United States.

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