

[www.DecadesYounger.com](http://www.DecadesYounger.com)

# **A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body**

**What You Need to Know to Have Your Best  
Quality of Life**

**Richard Schuller**



DecadesYounger.com

Publication

# **A Primer On Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body: What You Need to Know to Have Your Best Quality of Life**

**By**

**Richard Schuller**

**Copyright 2012**

**All Rights Reserved**

**No Part of this may be reproduced without written consent of the author**

**Disclaimer: This book is intended for information and education only. Any exercise or self help information entails some element of risk. This book is not a substitute for medical advice. The reader assumes all responsibility for taking any action based on the information offered in this publication.**

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Pain in the Joints, Spine and Skeletal System.....	6
Where do You Begin?.....	8
Some Non-Obvious Contributors to Back, Neck and Leg Pain.....	9
Muscle Pain and Injury.....	13
Basic Injury Prevention.....	14
Rehabilitation Exercises.....	22
Back.....	22
Neck.....	26
Shoulders.....	28
Knee.....	30
Hips and Legs.....	34
About the Author.....	36

I want to thank Fort Vancouver Cross Fit for the use of their facility in making this publication.

## **A Primer on Rehabilitating A 50+ Body:**

### **What You Need to Know to Have Your Best Quality of Life**

**By**

**Richard Schuller**

It is no secret that aging can take a toll on our bodies. It is also no secret that there are many things you can do to limit or reverse the damage associated with poor physical condition. In this brief guide, you will discover how you can make some major changes in the overall condition of your 50+ body, and perhaps achieve a level of fitness and freedom from the decline associated with aging that you never thought possible.

It took most people a long time to develop physical problems. The good news is that in many cases the time it takes to fix the problem is much less. It is great that you have decided to take action to rehabilitate some of the conditions that bother you. If you follow the advice in this brief work, most of you will find that you feel better, look better and have a better quality of life than you did before deciding to deal with your physical problems.

Make no mistake, the reward for being fit and healthy is yours to enjoy 24/7 every day. It comes when you get up in the morning and know that your physical problems will not limit what you want to do during the day. You can go from feeling sluggish and having problems moving around to feeling energetic and having few limits on what you decide to do.

But, first things first; you need to deal with physical problems that are limiting what you can do, and then get on to becoming as fit and healthy as you can. This book deals with strategies you can use to address a few of the more common physical problems that bother people over 50. The sections below are designed to give you a primer on how to deal with injury issues and how to prevent them from recurring.

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

I'll cover some of the more common causes of back pain, neck pain, shoulder and leg pain, and how you can develop a way to take corrective action for your own condition. I'll also cover some basic things you can use to help you in your rehabilitation (and pre-habilitation) to *keep* you in good condition.

Remember:

- It took a long time for most people to develop the problems that bother them at 50. Most of these conditions can be fixed in a much shorter time but you have to start slowly, build up your physical stress load gradually, and be consistent. There is no “quick fix”
- Don't get intimidated by your age. It will always be whatever it is. There are real effects of aging, but for the most part they do not *have* to take place nearly as quickly as most people seem to assume.
- Enjoy the process of getting fit and healthy. The whole objective of your doing the work to get fit and healthy is so that you can enjoy life....including the training.
- The limit on what you can do will be mainly determined by you! Most people have no real idea of what they can accomplish if they work at it. Don't accept your pre-conceived ideas about how little you can accomplish.

This information is intended to help you devise your own personal course of action to deal with your particular issues. It is not intended to be a substitute for sound medical advice. In fact, I will emphasize over and over again that you need to develop the solution to your unique problem in partnership with medical professionals. The advice offered below is intended to help you make the best decisions about your own rehabilitation and things you can do to help *prevent* disabling conditions from occurring.

Living pain free and having few limits on what you can do physically is something that many of us over 50 don't believe is really possible. However, assuming that you don't have any major structural damage, you will be amazed at what can be accomplished if you are diligent about your rehabilitation and follow up conditioning.

## **Pain in Joints, Spine and the Skeletal System**

Let's look at four ideas that you need to understand as you embark on your quest to rehabilitate and build up your body.

### **1 -Pain Usually Comes from Multiple Sources**

If you suffer from “a bad back” or other chronic pain, you should be aware that there is a good chance that the condition that plagues you comes from more than one source. To rid yourself of the problem, you will have to do a variety of different things. For example, if you have constant lower back pain, you will probably only find long term relief when you have built a strong set of abdominal muscles, increased the flexibility of your hamstring muscles, and relieve the symptoms may offer nothing but temporary relief.

While every person's situation may be different, you can almost always assume that if you are dealing with a limitation like “bad back” it will have multiple causes. You have to root out these causes, and deal with each of them or you will not find a permanent solution to your problem.

### **2 – Balanced muscularity is the key to keeping your body in proper alignment.**

Many times the pain and discomfort you suffer comes from the disproportionate development of opposing muscle groups. For example, the classic “lower back pain” imbalance comes when the abdominal muscles are weak, and the hamstring muscles are short and strong. This means that the lower spine will be pulled out of proper alignment, and pressure will be placed on the sciatic nerve.

Virtually everyone has some imbalances in their development. However, one of the issues with people over 50 (and younger) is often that the abdominal muscles become very weak, and thus allow the body to sag.

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

Imbalances appear in trained people as well. For example, many runners will have powerful hamstrings that are relatively inflexible. This will contrast with a poorly developed abdominal muscle group. The resulting pain arises from the same cause as in an unconditioned person.

One key to restoring full functionality to a body of any age is to work on developing good muscle balance. Too many people who train regularly neglect this, and consequently have more pain and restriction than they would expect.

**3 – It is critical to get to the root cause of your pain problem, not merely suppress symptoms.**

People who suffer from various types of pain will often opt for “solutions” that merely suppress the pain, and don’t get to the root cause of the problem. Prescription and non-prescription drugs can do a lot to temporarily rid you of pain. However, your goal should be to find out the combination of causes that may be at work. That is when more than occasional relief can be yours.

Once you have found a solution, your work is not done. To remain pain free you will have to craft a strategy that will *keep you* pain free. For example, if you change out your mattress, and condition your core muscles, then you have to keep both your muscles and your mattress in good condition.

### **4 -You are the Person Responsible for Your Own Health**

Many people seem to operate as if their body was simply a useful device for moving their head from place to place. They treat their body as if it were a junk car that could be dropped off at the repair shop for replacement parts. Their idea seems to be that keeping their own body in healthy condition is a job that can be “out sourced”. Unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth.

If you are going to have a great quality of life in the years beyond 50, it is critical that you accept the notion that *you* are responsible for your own good (or

---

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

bad) health. You can't simply go to the doctor and "swap out" your old body for a new one. You have to accept the idea that the person in charge of keeping you in good condition is *you* and no one else. Doctors can help you when you are sick or injured, but it is not their job to keep you fit.

With this in mind, recognize that there are many things you alone can do to enhance your own quality of life. You must resolve to do those things, and your reward will be living 24/7 in a body that allows you to do an amazing number of activities without restriction.

### **Where do You Begin?**

As I alluded to earlier, solving any person's problem will require that you develop a solution that addresses your unique problem. For this reason, I strongly suggest that your first action be to get a medical screening from your doctor, and combine this with physical therapy from a licensed professional.

This is particularly important if you are not in robust physical condition. Physical therapy can bring you to the point where you can begin to train on your own, and begin to build a strong and resilient body. It is really critical that you begin training at a level where you can improve consistently. If you start with too demanding a program, you will not be able to progress, and may even hurt yourself more. That is why I strongly recommend that you begin by getting your condition assessed by a doctor, and then get therapy from a licensed practitioner.

You should know that all doctors have specialties. Your best bet when it comes to getting help with the type of pain we are discussing here is to start with a "Sports Medicine" specialist. These physicians are oriented to helping you "get back in the game". Their treatment programs are designed to help you get from an injured condition, to the place where you can do what you want.

In mid to large sized cities, there will usually be several Sports Medicine clinics. Most often the doctors will have a specialty such as shoulders, spine,

---

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

knees, etc. You can find the one who is best suited to deal with your particular issue.

There are three areas where you should look to start getting rid of your pain. There is a good chance that if you have a problem, you will need to take action in each of these areas. They are:

- Non obvious sources of pain problems
- Injury prevention and treatment
- Rehabilitation and preventative exercises

### **Some Non-Obvious Contributors to Back, Neck and Leg Pain**

There are several things that you may not have considered that may be a key source of your pain. Each of these sort of “flys under the radar”, but can have a big impact on how you feel.

If you suffer from even occasional pain, here are five tips you can use that may give you relief. Back pain is usually associated with multiple causes. Here are some tips on things in your daily life that may be causing constant aggravation to your back.

If you have any or all of these problems, your back pain will continue even if you get treatments. The reason is, all of the problems noted below can constantly aggravate your condition even though you may be taking pain killers or getting other therapy. For any treatment to work, you have to deal with any source of constant aggravation.

#### **1. Your mattress may be worn out.**

If you get up in the morning with a sore back, or a sore neck, you should look at how your mattress is supporting you during sleep. If the mattress or springs is sagging in the middle, it can put all kinds of unwanted stresses on your back. Sleeping in a position that puts extra stress on your back and neck can produce a

lot of pain and stiffness. Some things you can do if your mattress does not support you well:

- See if rotating your mattress will give you a better sleeping surface. Flip it over, or simply rotate the mattress so that you are sleeping on a part that has not been used as much.
- Check to see if your inner springs are sagging and not giving you proper support. If this is the case, you can try rotating them.
- Go to a mattress store and check out new good sleeping surfaces. This will give you an idea of what you might have to do about either replacing your old mattress.

### **2. Worn out shoes can cause major problems other than for your feet.**

Perhaps the most common source of recurring leg, back and foot pain comes from poorly fitting or worn shoes. This is because the shoes wear down in such a way that causes us to walk with distorted alignment. This places unusual stress on parts of your feet, knees, hips and back. You literally can get a sore neck from having worn shoes.

The most common types of wear include the following:

- shoes are unevenly worn on the inside or outside of the heel;
- some shoes will “roll over” so that the outside or inside of your foot is not over the sole of the shoe;
- Deterioration of the support inside the shoe so that your foot does not get even support for each step.
- the shoe on one foot is evenly worn, but the other shoe is unevenly worn down.
- Your shoes should not cause problems like blisters, foot sores, or areas on your foot that are overly sensitive.

You should note that this advice applies both to your “street” shoes worn every day, and your sport shoes worn mainly for work outs. If *either* sets of shoes have significant wear problems, they can cause you a lot of problems.

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

Poorly fitting shoes can cause you all manner of other problems. If you develop a sore spot on your foot, then you automatically change how you walk and this can begin a chain of events that may create a lot of pain in other parts of your body. If you begin compensating for foot pain when you walk, then you will start to throw unusual stress on your hips, knees, back and ankles. The end result may be lots of pain in another part of your body. Again, check each pair of shoes you have to see if they may be contributing to your problem.

Check your street shoes to see if the arch support is in good shape. Poor arch support can cause all manner of problems. Any sign that you are not walking evenly on both feet will be an indication that you are probably aggravating your back as well as your feet and legs. Shoes that don't properly support you should be thrown out. All they are doing is hurting you.

Worn sports shoes are one of the most common causes of knee, hip and other leg pain in runners or people who play court sports. Even though you may be training hard, worn shoes will almost always create lots of problems by disrupting proper body mechanics. If your shoes are unevenly worn, or if they no longer give you good foot support, they can be the source of lots of problems.

If you are doing training that involves any form of running, you should NEVER skimp on the quality of your footwear. To avoid injury you need to have shoes that will support YOU during your training. What you need will depend on your size, weight and the type of running you do. Court shoes are usually not recommended for cross country running and visa versa.

I recommend that you buy your training shoes from a store that specializes in the activity you want to pursue. For example, tennis players should get their footwear at the store that specializes in tennis equipment. Runners should get their shoes at a store that specializes in running equipment. Usually there is a store in each moderate sized city where the elite athletes in any particular sport (ex: tennis, running) buy their shoes.

---

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

I have nothing against buying shoes at large sporting goods stores or specialty mall stores. The key is getting to know what is going to help you train hard, and not have to deal with injuries that come from poor footwear.

### **3. Where do you sit all day?**

If you want to find a major contributor to back and neck pain it is poor posture! Most people don't stand up straight...the way our bodies were designed to function best. Many people use poor posture when they sit at work. Over time, this constant misalignment of our neck and spine can create a huge number of problems that will gradually diminish with correct posture.

Most of us sit for a good portion of the day. In addition to poor posture, poor back support in our office chairs can lead to all manner of back problems. The same is true for our car seats. Many older car seats do not provide decent support for the lower back. Poorly designed car seats can create constant pressure on the lower spine. Inevitably this will lead to problems. To correct this problem, you can use a folded towel or seat insert that will give you better support.

If you work in an office, you should check on the support provided by the chair you sit in all day. Most modern office chairs provide decent support for the lower back. It is always a good idea to move around regularly when sitting all day. It is also a good idea to try and sit with a straight spine (military posture) and not slump. Good posture while sitting will help keep you from putting unneeded strain on your lower back.

It is a good idea to sit with "military posture" while working. That is, straight back, no slouching, and stomach pulled in. If you sit straight and tall, your stomach will naturally pull in rather than sag.

When working almost everyone develops a lot of tension in their neck and shoulders. It is a great idea to regularly get up from your chair, and rotate your shoulder blades to release the tension. Roll your neck around to relax the

muscles. Take several long slow deep breaths, and consciously release the tension in your neck and upper back. You will find that this can really you feel better both in the short term, and if done regularly, over the longer term.

#### **4. If you are overweight, you are placing a huge amount of extra stress on your feet, joints and spine.**

Being overweight is a problem that multiplies other health problems you may experience. Your own skeletal structure is built to carry a certain amount of weight, and additional weight may distort how you walk, lift and move. Because of this, people who have obesity problems, also have back problems. If you lose weight, you may find that many of your pain problems diminish or go away entirely.

You should also know that being overweight leads to a huge number of other medical problems that can contribute a lot to your pain and discomfort. Diabetes, high blood pressure and a variety of vascular problems will contribute a lot to chronic pain. Remember, a lot of pain has multiple sources. Be aware that being overweight can contribute to pain you may think comes from another source.

The answer for a healthy and happy life is to get your body fat to as low a level as you can regularly manage, and keep it there. You will get the reward 24/7/365.

### **Muscle Pain and Injury**

Minor muscle injuries occur with some regularity. These are usually manifest as having “sore” muscles, having a very tender spot in your muscles or on a tendon, or having your range of motion limited by pain in certain positions.

The most common muscle injuries come from some type of overuse. They are often found as very sore or tender spots. These are called “trigger points” and are essentially knots and tangles of muscle tissue. They are very inflamed,

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

and will persist or expand if not treated. The main way to treat these is with ice therapy or with message therapy. This will be discussed later.

Minor tendon injuries are show up as a sore spot on the tendon. Again this is an inflammation much like the trigger points in muscle tissue. Again, these injuries will spawn more injuries if they are not treated.

There are several things you can do to limit the likelihood of getting these injuries, and some things you can do to treat them when they do happen.

### **Basic Injury Prevention Steps**

#### **Tip 1. Start slow and build up gradually.**

When you begin an activity that stresses muscles you have not used in a while, it is ALWAYS best to begin training at a low intensity. In weight training, I always advise everyone to begin with light weights and relatively high repetitions so that you are conditioning the muscle for more demanding loads as you get in better condition.

You should NEVER do an exercise “to failure” or anywhere close to it during your first month of doing a new training movement. You are far better off “blowing off” a set of exercises, or a certain movement if you are fatigued or if you don’t “feel right”.

Training at low intensity while you are developing the resilience to do harder loads is not easy to do. The “social pressure” of keeping up with your gym buddies or other people in the class is always there. You need to be tough about this and skip movements when you don’t feel right. The only person who’s going to get hurt is YOU...not the person you think is watching. You are not going to become a super human from the effort you put out in one work out. However, you CAN become injured and slow or stop your progress.

Let’s assume for the moment that you have been training for some time, and are well conditioned for one sport or activity. Assume for the moment that you are a dynamite tennis player, but you want to add some weight training. You

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

need to follow the same gradual approach to building up your strength and resilience. Your body is well trained for one activity, but needs to be introduced to the “new” conditioning gradually. Take it slow at first, and you will be amazed what you can actually accomplish.

I suggest the gradual build up approach whether the person training is age 50 or 20. It is more important for the 50 year old because frankly, we take longer to heal from an injury, and are more likely to get discouraged and quit if we get injured. You can achieve mind blowing results, but these results come from training consistently over time, and staying away from the injury bug.

### **Tip 2. Warm up properly, and stay warm during exercise.**

Warming up is something that most people who exercise take casually. Often this leads to an unwanted muscle injury, and occasionally worse. You don't need to take a huge amount of time to warm up, but it is important to get your muscles ready to perform. Here are some simple steps you can take that will help you warm up properly.

Dress so that you are warm throughout the training session or event. Your muscles will respond better if you are warm, but not overheated. If needed, dress in layers so that you can shed clothing as your body warms up.

The purpose of a warm up is to get your blood flowing to all parts of your body, and remove any stiffness in your muscles before taking starting to move quickly. For most people the best way to do this is to do some SLOW jogging for about 2-3 minutes maximum.

It is not a good idea to “stretch” a cold muscle. You should be somewhat warm before attempting any stretching. Stretches during the warm up should not be intense, but rather should help you ease into more vigorous activity.

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

Take a few moments to *gently* move your arms through the range of motion you will be doing in your training. This will help loosen joints and muscles. The emphasis should be easy movement rather than any sort of stress.

Do some easy knee bends without any weight. Again the idea is to get flexible and warm while putting out a minimal effort.

At this point you should be ready for any activity specific warm up that you regularly use. For example, if you are a swimmer, you should be ready for some easy laps. If you are a golfer, you should be ready for some practice swings.

If you train regularly, one thing that I have learned in the sport of powerlifting is that it is a really good idea to “practice” your warm up with the same diligence that you practice your sport or activity. In my case, the training session consists of lifting some *very heavy* weights. To be ready to do this I carefully practice a warm up routine that enables me to go from a cold start to being able to produce an all out exertion. Interestingly enough, this warm up does not take much time....but it does take a lot of focus.

Warming up will help reduce the muscle injuries that come from not being ready to exert. These are the most common type of muscle injury, but they typically disrupt your workout program for days or weeks at a time.

One final note on warming up; it is a good idea to keep warm during your training session. When your body is hot, the air will seem cold, and often this will lead to sub-optimal performance and occasionally muscle injury. Don't be afraid to take clothing off and then put it back on later if you feel a chill. Stay warm....stay loose...

### **Tip 3. You are better off doing less than you are doing too much.**

Earlier I briefly discussed the risks associated with training too hard when you first start to work out. Men in particular seem to be unable to go easy when

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

they are getting back into shape. The tendency to overwork is far more prevalent than the inclination to do too little.

Reality is that “over training” has the potential to do lots of damage to your body, and certainly disrupt any training program you may be on. Over the decades I have competed in weight sports I have seen several people who performed well below their potential because they did far too much work, and were either tired or suffering from one injury or another.

When you begin a comeback, or begin training for the first time, remember that the sky is the limit to what you *can* accomplish. The issue for you is training *smart* not training too hard. In this case, being “smart” means that you clearly understand what you can reasonably accomplish in any given training session, and not go too far beyond that. There is a very fine line between doing something at your maximum capacity, and getting hurt. Most of us have found where the line is through trial and error....mostly error.

There is an old expression found in gyms around the world “no pain, no gain”. I want to assure you that after 55 years of competing in sports, the phrase should be “no pain, no suffering”. I don’t mean to imply that physical training is easy or does not take hard effort. However, there is a big difference between pushing yourself according to a systematic training plan, and merely working so hard you hurt yourself.

At any stage of your training, if you don’t feel like it is a good idea to do a given set, or play another round, *don’t do it!!!!* This is especially true when you are first starting out, or just getting back into shape. The idea that progress comes from relentlessly pushing yourself every workout or match is strictly for the people who never win anything. If you don’t feel like pushing yourself on a given day....don’t do it.

To illustrate the point, I’ll use the example of a friend of mine who is a very good competitive lifter. Unfortunately for him, he rarely heeds my advice about pulling back during a workout if you don’t feel up to the challenge. During one particularly intense training session he was pulling heavy deadlifts, and after two

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

reps was fully spent. But, his program said “do 3”, so he pulled with all his might. Net result: he ruptured one Achilles tendon, and tore a hamstring muscle. He had two surgeries and took a year to recover.

This is an extreme case, but the point is that you have to use your mind if you are really going to build your body.

### **Tip 4. Good nutrition is critical if you want to be free of pain.**

This should be a no-brainer, but most people overlook the fact that a lot of the “aches and pains” we experience are the consequence of poor nutrition. Junk food and lots of sugar will give you inflammation and digestive problems, not to mention overloading your liver processing toxic waste.

If you are serious about ridding yourself of pain, and building a strong and healthy body, it is absolutely imperative that you get proper nutrition. A more positive way of putting it is that if you intend to build the body of an elite athlete, then you need to eat like an elite athlete.

By this I don’t mean to jump on the Michael Phelps 12,000 calories a day diet...but rather that you eat nutritious foods at a caloric level designed to get you to an optimal body weight for your size and muscularity.

This is not the place to go into great detail about the specifics of diet and nutrition. I refer you to the many superb options that have been developed by a wide range of athletic nutrition experts. I have links to several of these on my web site at [www.DecadesYounger.com](http://www.DecadesYounger.com).

### **Tip 5. Basic Sports “First Aid” – Ice and Massage**

The most basic first aid for any athlete is the ice bag. You see ice used everywhere in pro and college sports and among the savvy week-end warriors. The first thing you do when you get a muscle strain, bruise or other injury, is apply

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

an ice bag. This simple first aid can have a dramatic impact on how rapidly you recover, and how well you feel after the injury.

The purpose of ice is to increase the blood flow to the impacted area. Icing an injury helps speed recovery and reduces associated swelling. Place the ice bag directly over the wounded area. You can use ice on any are of the body: hands, legs, back, neck and so forth.

If you can stand it, place the ice bag directly on your skin. If this is too uncomfortable, put a thin piece of cloth, such as an undershirt between your skin and the ice bag.

Each ice treatment should be for 10-15 minutes at a time. If possible, treat the injured area 2 or 3 times in a day. If you can't do this many, one is much better than none.

You can do most of the treatments when you are sitting. Some of the back treatments can only be done when lying down. I'll describe one of the main ones below.

You can purchase a therapeutic ice bag from most drug stores. Buy one and keep it in the freezing compartment of your refrigerator. If you don't have access to your home ice bag, you can make one by putting ice in any plastic sack that does not leak. Grocery sacks produce sacks or sandwich bags can be used for this purpose. These throw away options work very well. All you need is something to hold the ice and the water as the ice melts.

Most of the time when you ice an injury, you will be sitting in a chair with the ice bag applied to the area are treating. For back injuries, especially lower back injuries, you may want to lie down, and place the ice under you directly on the injured area. When you do this, be careful to insure that the ice bag does not press into your back to the point where it hurts. When icing a back injury it is almost always much more comfortable to bring your knees up, and place a pillow or blanket under them. When your legs are straight, much more strain can be placed on the injured area.

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

The second part of basic sports first aid is message. You can do a good deal to break up muscle knots or “trigger points” by applying pressure directly to the impacted area. You can most easily do this by either using a therapeutic “roller” shown in the picture below, or visit a professional message therapist.

Applying pressure directly to a trigger point can be painful, but if you regularly use the message roller, you will gradually eliminate many trigger points (perhaps all of them). Using the roller on at least a twice weekly basis can really go a long way to removing many sources of muscle pain.

The basic way you use the roller is to place it on the floor, and then position your body in such a way that some of your bodyweight is supported by the roller *on the spot where you have muscle pain*. For example, if you have a pain in the back of the leg, you would place the roller under the leg, and then shift your hands and feet so that a lot of your weight is bearing down on the roller. You then maneuver your body so that you move your leg back and forth on the roller.

When you do this, the immediate sensation is that it is painful. This is because the rolling action is breaking up the tangle of muscle fibers and increasing blood flow to the sore area. You can moderate how painful this is by lifting some of your weight off the roller. You want to keep rolling the painful area for a minute or two. Gradually, the pain should subside.

The next time you treat the impacted area with the roller the pain will have diminished significantly. When you use the roller on muscle areas that do not have trigger points, you will notice that there is no sensation of pain.



## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

You can get a therapeutic roller from many large sporting goods stores, from many yoga studios, and on the internet. They will come with instructions for use. Like the ice bag, they should be part of your collection of items that keep you feeling good.

If you prefer, you can also get a variety of message therapies from licensed massage therapists. There are a large number of these practitioners in almost every city and town. You need to interview them about their rates and the types of treatments they offer.

There are some very aggressive types of message therapy, such as Rolfing, that are good for trained athletes, but may be a little more than you want to do. Most therapists will be able to give you a good basic message that will eliminate some trigger points, and make your body feel better. Over time you can decide how much you want to use their services, and how much you want to treat yourself.

Finally, you may also find it useful to take an anti-inflament. The most commonly used non-prescription drug is Ibuprofen. (Trade names: Advil, Motrin, etc.) Some people cannot use these drugs, and only you can know for certain whether it is all right for you to do so.

As with the ice and message, the purpose of ibuprofen is to reduce swelling and inflammation around the injury. This will speed healing.

Again, if you train sensibly, your injuries should be few. But, when they do occur, you should apply ice at the first opportunity.

### Rehabilitation Exercises

If you are in good enough condition to engage in regular physical exercise, the following movements can help you build the muscle structure that will both rehabilitate your problems and help prevent them from recurring.

The program below assumes that you have been cleared to do physical exercise by your physician. If you have severe injuries or have major problems from another health condition, your rehabilitation should be supervised by a licensed medical professional.

The exercises offered here are very basic, and will help you get to the level of fitness where you can do much more aggressive and demanding movements. If you have severe problems in one of the areas discussed here, it is imperative that your rehabilitation be done with a licensed physical therapist. For most people, this self help program should help you get rolling.

### Back Exercises

As I mentioned earlier, if you have back problems I strongly recommend a FREE book by Jesse Cannone called [The 7 Day Back Pain Cure](#). This book is a treasure trove of solid information that you need to keep your back in great shape for your entire life. You will also find a huge array of products, product reviews, and other options that can help you lead a pain free life. Again, the book is FREE and will help you more than you ever imagined.

As noted above, muscle imbalance is one of the primary causes of back pain. The most common imbalance problem is weakness in the abdominal muscles and overly developed hamstrings. This causes the spine to sag, and pressure to be applied to some nerves. This is the source of pain.

The first thing to do is strengthen the abdominal muscles. A strong core area is critical if you are going to have an active life. The simplest and safest exercise that you can do to begin building your core is the “crunch”.

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

Begin by lying on the floor, or on a bed if you cannot comfortably get down to the floor and back up. Raise your knees up so that they are comfortably elevated. If you wish, you can put a pillow or blanket under them. Elevating the knees takes pressure off the lower back in this movement.

Place your hands behind your head. Using *only* the muscles in your stomach, *slowly* roll up until your shoulders are one or two inches off the floor. Hold the position for a count of two, and *slowly* lower your shoulders back to the floor. Don't pull on your neck with your hands. Use only the muscles of your abdominal area to raise your shoulders off the floor.

If you have not trained your abdominal muscles for a long time, begin with no more than five repetitions of this movement. You will be unpleasantly surprised how sore you may be the following day or how rapidly you develop muscle cramps if you are untrained and start out doing too many repetitions. You will gradually build up to the point where you can do 20 reps without a break. You should do this five times in seven days.

As you get better conditioned, you can add a second set of crunches. Eventually, you will change over to another more demanding training routine. However, in the early going, stick with crunches, and build up your core muscles



The picture above shows the proper position for the crunch. You should not rise off the floor any higher than shown in the picture.

---

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

The second movement in this set is the Hurdlers Stretch. The purpose of this movement is to make the hamstring muscles on the back of your legs put less tension on your lower back. The movement is a static stretch that has been used in many sports since the 1920's as part of the warm up for sprinters, hurdlers and other speed athletes.

Begin in a seated position on the floor. Put the left leg out straight in front of you, and place your right foot up against your left knee. Keep your back straight and chest up throughout this movement. Bend from the waist, and keeping your left leg straight on the floor, reach toward your left toe with your right hand. You should feel your hamstring tighten, as well as your hips.

You should feel tension in your hamstring. When this happens, lean forward *slightly* and hold for a count of two. You want to stretch the hamstring gently and hold the stretch briefly, then relax and return to the starting position. *Keep your back straight when you are doing the stretch.* Also, keep your left leg flat on the floor. When doing this movement, *do not* bounce or jerk into the stretch. You should go into the stretch slowly and without evenly.

The photograph shows the proper position for the hurdlers stretch.



## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

When you have done five stretches with your left leg extended in front. Switch positions and put the right leg out in front, and stretch five times from that side.

At the start, most people will be quite inflexible, and not be able to stretch to a very great depth. Don't worry about this. The key is progress over time. It is not where you start, but how much progress you make over the weeks when you do this movement.

As with the crunch movement, you should do the hurdlers stretch exercise five days out of seven.

There is another exercise that you can do if you are in reasonably good condition, and you want to relieve the compression on your back. This is simply hanging from an overhead bar. You can do this for five to ten seconds, and allow your spine to decompress. You can either hop up and grab the bar, or step off some a chair or block. In any event, ease into hanging from the bar. You don't want to injure a muscle or strain your hand if you are not ready to hold your body weight in this manner.



If you have access to an inversion table, you can use one of those to decompress your spine. Generally inversion tables are expensive. I generally advise against purchasing a single use piece of equipment, especially if it may have only limited benefit for you over time. You should assess whether the inversion table will be something that will help you over the long haul before you

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

consider buying one. You get a lot of the same effect from simply hanging by your hands from an overhead bar.

### **Movements for the Neck**

Problems arise in the neck area in many cases because of poor posture and not flexing or extending the spine regularly. For example, people tend to “slump” when sitting at their desk, or at a computer screen. Sitting with a ‘slump” for weeks, months and years will take a toll on your neck, back and spine.

You should always try to sit, stand and walk with an erect posture. The tendency for many people is to lean forward or slump. If you want to restore your back to a more robust condition, you should begin by standing and sitting with erect posture.

Standing with erect posture means standing as tall as you can manage, and trying to keep yourself aligned that way. It sometimes helps to think of yourself as being suspended from a string attached to the top of your head.

One side benefit from standing tall is that the abdominal muscles to contract and your stomach will not sag as much as it would if your posture was “bent over”. This is a good example of how good posture can lead to a better overall appearance.

Sitting with erect posture can be done by sitting on the edge of a chair, and keeping your spine as straight and erect as possible. Keep your abdominal muscles tucked in rather than allowing them to fully relax. At first this posture may seem strange, especially if you are used to slumping or slouching back in the chair. After a while you will find that it seems normal and you assume this posture without thinking.

Often neck problems are the consequence of only moving your head in a very limited range of motion. Over time, if you don’t rotate your neck very much,

---

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

the muscles that control rotation will temporarily lose their strength. With muscle control in any part of your body the rule is “use it or lose it”.

There are a few simple movements that can be done to help you enhance the flexibility of your neck. The easiest is called the “neck roll”. This simply involves allowing your head to fall forward as far as it will go, and then rotating it to the right, then back, then to the left and finally back to the starting position.

This “roll” will both activate the muscles in your neck, but will also help break up small calcium deposits in your neck. The first few times you do the roll, you will hear what sounds like feet walking across gravel. Over time, your flexibility will improve and the calcium deposits will disappear.



Initially, do the “neck roll” three to five times a day. It only takes a few moments, and you can do it at your desk, while working on the computer, or literally any time you have a few moments where you feel the need to relieve some tension.

Another neck movement that will help enhance your flexibility is to turn your head to one side and see how far you can twist to that side. Keep your posture erect while doing this. You can do this a few times a day every day and you will get improved range of motion in your neck.

### Exercises to help Shoulders

Sore or malfunctioning shoulders are one of the problems that beset many people of all ages. Shoulder issues become particularly nagging in middle age. In this section, I'll show you a few movements that you can use to help restore strength, balance and flexibility to your shoulders.

The first movement that I recommend you use on a regular basis is called the "Overhead Dumbbell Walk". This exercise may seem strange, especially if you are used to a gym where everyone trains with machines. However, it is used on a regular basis by top college and professional football teams to rehab and strengthen player's shoulders. It is also a favorite of swimmers, tennis players and other athletes who subject their shoulders to lots of stress in different positions.

The Overhead Dumbbell Walk is very easy to do. Don't let this fool you into thinking it has little effect. If practiced regularly, this exercise will not only help restore a lot of capacity to your shoulders, but will really help prevent problems from arising in the future.

You begin this exercise standing, and taking a light dumbbell in your right hand and pressing it out to arms length overhead. Now that you have the dumbbell overhead, keep your arm straight overhead, and walk about 50 feet in one direction. Lower the dumbbell then put it in your left hand. As before, press it to arms length, and walk back 50 feet to where you started.

At first do three circuits with a very light weight. The idea is to build up your capacity to the place where you can do three to five circuits with a moderate to heavy weight. Take time to build up the work load on this one.

This exercise should be part of your regular workout program for as long as you train with weights. You don't need to do it every training session, but after you are fully rehabilitated, do it at least four times a month to insure that you keep the shoulder support muscles in good condition.

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---



The reason this is so effective is that when you walk, you engage every support muscle required to keep the shoulder working properly. You literally activate every muscle from your toes to the tips of your fingers. Most importantly, you engage all the small muscles that support the shoulder, and must work together to keep it strong and healthy.

Movements that work on the rotator muscles for the shoulder are shown below. The most important thing to remember doing these exercises is that *the weight you use should be light and do them with perfect form*. These movements will activate muscle groups that tend to become dormant unless they are targeted with a specific exercise. The net result for you will be stronger support muscles for all the activities that bring the shoulder into play.



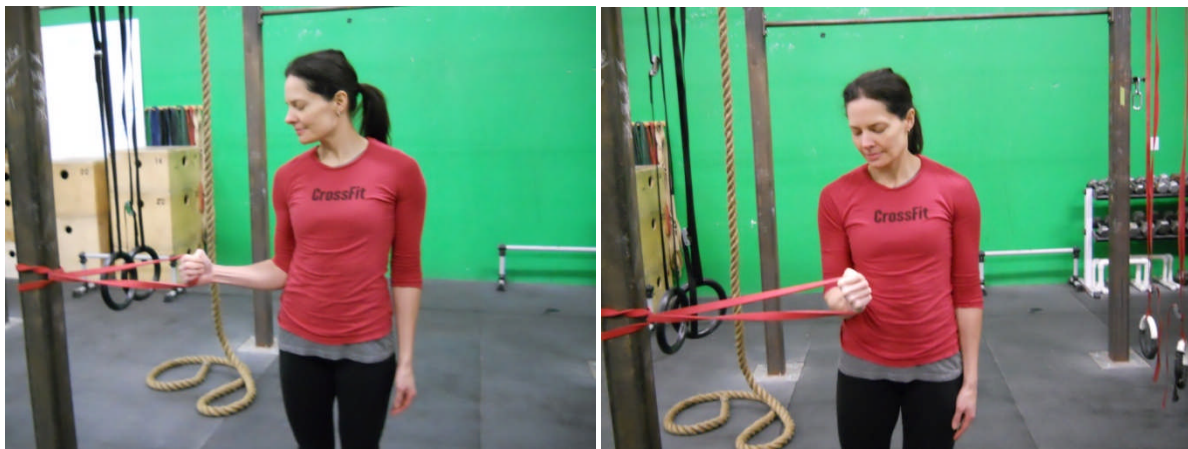
---

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

When you do these, select a weight or resistance that enables you to do the movement fifteen times with moderate effort. Again, the purpose is not to build bulging muscles. Rather it is to activate and train small muscle groups that support the large ones.

Do three sets of fifteen repetitions with each arm. Do this three times per week. When you resume regular training, you can reduce this exercise to two sets of fifteen twice per week. After you have been doing this for two months, discontinue it. If you are training seriously and have no problems, you need only do this once every two weeks to keep the rotators working properly.



### **Movements to help Knee Problems**

Knee problems often emerge as we age. Like most of the conditions discussed in this report, knee problems stem from multiple sources. Most knee issues will be the result of problems that have been going on for a long time, rather than a single event. For example, if someone is overweight, they have been placing excess stress on their knees for months or years before any significant effects are noticed. Another example, deteriorated shoes will place uneven stress on knees for months before any symptoms emerge.

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

If it has taken a long time to create the problem, you should not expect that therapy will give you instant results. Rehabilitating knees may take some time, but making corrections and doing the right thing is always the way to go if you want to have solid knees over the long term.

There is a limit to the degree you can rehabilitate knees if there is cartilage damage. Cartilage is one of the unique tissues in the body that will not restore itself with therapy. You are born with a certain amount, and that is all you get. The only way to deal with knees that have significant cartilage damage is to find an orthopedic physician who specializes in treatment of knee problems. Only they can give you solid guidance on what to do about your unique condition.

On the other hand, there are a whole array of common knee problems that stem from poor muscle support. This can produce sore ligaments, strained ligaments, and inflamed tendons. These are the type of problem that you can help with some specialized exercises and insuring that you are not stressing your knees with deteriorated shoes or excess body weight.

You can actually strengthen the muscular support structure around the knee so that you reduce the chances for a sudden injury such as a tear of the knee ligaments (ACL and MCL). This is particularly important if you play court sports and are constantly changing direction during a game.

The exercises below are simple, but if practiced regularly can be very effective in building up the multiple muscle groups that support the knee.

The first is called the “Figure 8 Dumbbell Weave”. This movement was allegedly devised by Soviet Sport Scientists as a way to help strengthen the knees of elite Soviet athletes during the Cold War era.

You begin with a light dumbbell in your right hand. Hold it by one end. Bend over at the waist so that your trunk is a little above parallel with the floor. Keep your back flat! Bend your knees as you bend over at the waist. With the dumbbell in your right hand, pass it back between your legs to your left hand that is reaching around behind you. Take the dumbbell in your left hand and swing it

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

around the outside of your left leg. Then pass the dumbbell through your legs to the right hand which is reaching around behind you. Then swing the dumbbell around the outside of your right leg and pass it back to the left hand again. The path that the dumbbell takes is a “figure 8” with your left and right foot in the middle of the top and bottom of the “8”.



When you are comfortable with passing the dumbbell around your legs in a figure 8 pattern, you can add another wrinkle to this exercise. This variation is simple, but very important. As you pass the dumbbell around your knees, *lean in the direction you are passing the dumbbell*. As you pass the weight around your knees, you will be simulating a “skating” motion going side to side. This movement will activate support muscles around your knee, and help strengthen them in different positions.

Begin practicing the Figure 8 Pass with 8 to 10 full circles. Then change the direction of the pass, and do 8 to 10 repetitions with the dumbbell being passed in the opposite direction. You can gradually work up to doing 2 to 3 sets of 20 reps. The weight should not be heavy, and the objective of this movement is not to handle heavy weights. Rather you should become comfortable passing a moderate to light weight around your knees, rocking from side to side as you do so, for twenty easy reps.

A second movement, also from the Soviets, is more technically difficult, but can help you in a variety of ways. Again you are going to use a figure 8 movement, but this time without weight.

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

Stand erect and lift your right foot off the ground in front of you about 6 inches. Balancing only on your left foot, you will make small figure 8's in the air with your right foot. When you have done ten of these, switch feet and do ten while balancing on the right foot.



This may be surprisingly difficult for you at first. Very few people can do this without significant practice. Thus, when you first start doing this movement, make certain that there is a chair or some other stationary object that you can grab to maintain your balance. Eventually, you will not need any balancing assist. When that happens you can add to the difficulty of the movement by standing on one foot and making figure 8's out to the side of your body, and then behind. Each variation requires different muscles to coordinate and support you while you do the movement.

This movement has the benefit of activating many smaller muscles that tend to be unused, but are essential to maintain your balance, and coordination. This exercise will help give you better balance and work on the chain of muscles that support your leg and knee during a wide variety of movements.

---

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

### A Movement to help the Hips and Legs

As we age, we tend not to work our muscles through a full range of motion. In the case of legs and hips, very few of us are inclined to do a full knee bend. Some people can't do this movement at all. Here is a simple and safe way to work your legs, and hips through a full range of motion.

Stand in front of a very stable object that you can use for support. A squat rack or bed post can serve this purpose. You will be doing a full deep knee bend, but will do so while holding the support and using your hands and arms to lower yourself into a deep squat. This allows you to do a full squat, but minimize the stress on your hips and legs as you go way down into the bottom position.



### Conclusion

You should always be aware that if you are out of shape, you need to begin your training by dealing with any nagging injury problems. You will find that by diligently working on your flexibility and muscle balance, you will gradually reduce or eliminate many of your aches and pains.

If you want to get a full program to take you from completely out of shape to very good shape, please check out my website at [www.DecadesYounger.com](http://www.DecadesYounger.com). In my book *A Guide to Getting Younger After 60: How to take a 10 Years Off Your*

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

Body, I lay out a program that you can follow for a *full year*. This will take you from dead stop to flying high. I also have a number of other peoples products that I recommend you check out. There is also a lot of free stuff that allows you to “kick the tires” before you buy something. [www.DecadesYounger.com](http://www.DecadesYounger.com)

Finally, if you are curious about who wrote this guide, I have included a short section about me. As you can see, I practice what I preach. When I tell you it works, it is because I have used it myself and have taught it to many others.

As a parting thought, always enjoy the journey. Getting in good condition is one of those things that pay you dividends 24/7. You can do all sorts of activities without even thinking about any physical limitations. You also feel great. Most of us who are in good physical condition actually enjoy our training work outs. I hope you get to that place as well. Fitness is something *really nice* you do for yourself.

# A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

## About the Author

You are probably wondering who would live to be 71 and then write a book about physical fitness. Well....here are some tidbits about me that will give you a little insight into my background.

Why did I write this book?

For openers, I started lifting weights in 1955 so that I could play high school football. After track season my freshman year, I was a less than imposing physical specimen at 5'9" tall and 129 pounds. I managed to find one of the three bodybuilding publications put out at the time, and ordered a set of barbells from Joe Weider. They were delivered by Railway Express (remember them?) the day school let out for summer. I spent the summer lifting and blissfully wandered into fall football practice at the same height, but 165 pounds. Needless to say, this made quite a difference in how I was able to compete.

During high school, I also wrestled, and ran track. When I went to college (Michigan State), I was on the intercollegiate weight lifting team (Olympic style lifting). From early 1962 until late 1965 I was on active duty in the Navy, with some service in Vietnam. I returned to the states in the fall of 1965 and began graduate studies at the University of Oregon. I continued lifting regularly, and got involved with a lot of elite athletes who were just beginning to use weight training as part of their sports training. You read about my development as a runner in the cardio training sections of the book.

From 1970 until 1975 I was a faculty member at the University of Tennessee, and a staff member at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. During this period I competed in running at every distance from 100 yards to 15 miles. I also continued weight training and had connections with many athletes and coaches at the University who were using weight training in their programs.

In 1975 I moved to the Seattle area and spent the next 27 years as a scientist and manager at the Battelle Seattle Research Center. I competed in all different types of running events, and played "beer league" softball. In 1985 I got

## A Primer on Rehabilitating a 50+ Year Old Body

---

tired of competing in running and began training for powerlifting (squat, bench press and deadlift). I continue to do that today.

I have competed in eight US National Masters Powerlifting Championships, winning one title and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> on two other occasions. The highlight of my lifting career came in 2005 where as a member of the US national team, I placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in the International Powerlifting Federation World Masters Championships held in Pretoria, South Africa. I'm also a member of the State of Washington Powerlifting Hall of Fame.



I'm still playing hard with the iron. The picture above was taken a year ago while I was training on the deadlift. That is a cool 388 pounds on the bar. Notice the blissful expression on my face. Oh...I'm 5' 10" tall and weigh 185 pounds.

I also have a life outside of lifting and writing. I have a family with two kids and four grand kids and live in Vancouver, WA.

If you are interested in hearing more from me check out [www.DecadesYounger.com](http://www.DecadesYounger.com)