

## SENIORS' HEALTH: Q & A

WITH BOBBIE LU-KOPF RMT

### ***What do you think the core ingredients of seniors' health are?***

I generally break it down into 4 main things: range of motion, posture, balance, and breathing.

Being a bit stiff first thing in the morning is normal, but you don't want poor range of motion to cause discomfort throughout the day or restrict your normal activities, whether that's going for a walk or playing with grandkids.

If we don't maintain our core strength — all those muscles that stabilize our centers — as we age, we tend to collapse in on ourselves with poor posture. This in turn reduces our range of motion and makes us even stiffer.

Maintaining the health of joints and muscles, especially in the lower body, is extremely important for balance and mobility. Having good range of motion and strength in your hips and feet can help prevent falls, and if your joints are strong and appropriately flexible, you're less likely to seriously injure yourself if you do fall.

Breathing seems obvious, but a lot of us don't do it as effectively as we should! It's easy to fall into shallow, upper-chest breathing, which can increase tension and stress. When we can learn how to slow down and take full breaths into our bellies and ribs, we get more oxygen, increase circulation, and decrease stress and muscle tension, all of which lead to better posture, better range of motion, and better balance.

### ***Can seniors improve in these areas even if they haven't done much exercise before?***

Absolutely! They're all connected, so often improving one of them will help the other three. Even spending a few minutes every day doing basic exercises that focus on each of these areas can have a huge impact over time.

***Bobbie Lu-Kopf*** is a Registered Massage Therapist and certified Pilates instructor. She teaches a weekly "Essential Core for Seniors" class, which covers all of the areas addressed above, as well as Yin Yoga, mat Pilates, Qigong, and T'ai Chi.

