

Exercise and The Spine

Aging and Flexibility

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Individuals of any age can improve their flexibility through regular exercise and stretching. The result will vary depend on many factors, some of which are modifiable and others which are not.

The aging process is associated with a loss of water content in musculoskeletal and connective tissues. Part of the reason is the loss of chemical building blocks, which attract and hold water within the tissues. Tissue dehydration result in approximately of supportive collagen fibers. This increases the process of cross -inking or adherence of fairly rigid fibers, which are normally separated by interstitial fluids. This contributes to progressive stiffening of tissues. Regular stretching will help stimulate the production and retention of fluids which act as lubricants between the connective tissue fibers. Nerve fiber dropout, muscle atrophy and connective tissue replacement of contractile tissues also contributes to the loss of spinal flexibility during the aging process. Regular stretching also helps prevent the formation of restrictive soluble and insoluble cross linking collagen (adhesions/scar).