

A group of swimmers, including men and women of various ages, are standing on the deck of a boat. They are wearing swimwear and swim caps. The background shows the churning water of the sea. A semi-transparent dark box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text.

7 Secrets for Fitness After 50

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7 Secrets for Senior Fitness

Fitness After Fifty

Yes, you can build bone and strengthen, shape and define muscle - and build a nice body at the same time - even if you are over 50. But you can't do it by doing the things that you did in the gym when you were younger.

In fact doing some of those things that you did when younger will be detrimental when you are older, such as using gym machines. As you age you lose your natural balance, and gym machines accelerate that decline. I've been exercising seriously now for nearly 20 years after getting one of the frights of my life by being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. I've made a lot of mistakes, and also learnt a lot of things that you won't find on google about exercising when your older.

In this book I give you a heads-up on some of the key things I have learnt. Hopefully this will save you years of experimentation and get faster results than I achieved. That said, I'm very happy with what I have achieved. When I last visited the doctor for my annual check-up on December 12, 2018 (aged 70 1/2) my blood pressure was 121 / 60 my resting heart rate 51, my body fat 18% and my strength and flexibility excellent. My doctor reported that a recent bone density test had come back with my bones being 25% more dense than the population average for men my age, and 10% more dense than the average 25 year old male. That's all because of doing the proper exercises in the right way, with progression.

I've selected the following topics because they address questions I often hear, or bad practices I often see in the gym being followed by people 50+

1. How Long Will It Take Me To Get Fit
2. Less Is More
3. Cutting the Cardio and Hitting The High Intensity
4. There Is No Best Diet For Weight Loss
5. The Fat Loss Zone Is A Myth
6. Why You Should Not Use The Gym Machines
7. Strength Strategy for Aging Muscles

How To Use This Book

I suggest that you read the whole book, then talk to your trust health professional about what makes sense for you. They won't all agree with me. A 30 year-old Personal Trainer who has been brought up on gym machines isn't going to concede the damage they are doing to older bodies. So use your judgement. If you think the PT will be as fit and strong as me when he is 70 then you have a choice to make.

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About Me



Hi, I'm Walter and I'm 70 this year (2018). In corporate life I was travelling in Asia 2 weeks of every month, out of Australia. Staying healthy was difficult, and I saw fellow corporate travellers die on the road from their excesses. Then, after 5 years, I was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. That was a shock and the first thing I did was to go into denial. Finally I made the choice to act. Even though I didn't really know what to do, becoming fit was part of my "plan". Just as well, because 12 years later I was diagnosed with a lethal cancer said to be terminal in 5 years, and 3 years later with an aggressive melanoma.

I'm still here, and that's because my mind and body are connected and engaged. It starts with a balanced high-nutrition diet - giving you the zest and energy to want to train and get fit. I can help you do the same, and I know that you can do the same. In fact, I'll coach you to success and teach you how to age healthily.

Getting fit is the tricky bit, because it's not what you might have done when you were younger. Over 17 years of continuous training and observation and study I have learnt what 98% of doctors and personal trainers don't know about exercising for over 50s. You need to be doing bone-building body-shaping exercises that also build strength, posture and flexibility. And your training goal is to be always focused on lowering your body age. Everything else is a side-effect or a side-benefit of training to lower your body age. ***That's the 'secret sauce' of training for over-50s.***

When you understand this, and start to feel it in the results that you will get, then it will change your approach to exercising. You will be able to make choices about the right kind of exercises, and avoid those that will ultimately make things worse. You will also experience another fantastic side-effect - the benefits of mind-body neural-activation. This means that the mind and body become more actively engaged, and new neural paths are fired. My personal journey and what I have learnt have convinced me that it is never too late to dramatically improve your health and fitness - provided you do it the right way. I can help you.

1. How Long Will It Take Me To Get Fit?

A common question people ask me is how long it will take for them to see some "results"? Expecting results too early, and expecting the wrong results, is a common reason that people lose motivation and give up on their training and fitness ambitions.

In fact, one of the reasons that I now advocate a high-nutrition diet as the first step in any fitness and healthy ageing program is because we know that we can get "results" over the first 30 days. Now, those results will not necessarily be weight loss, although most often significant weight loss is achieved. The outcome of weight loss should be viewed as a side-effect of a well balanced diet and an exercise program.

The other key outcomes that can be achieved in the first 30 days are having more energy and therefore feeling more like exercising, better sleep and recovery, and a lighter "feeling" in the body as the organs all kick into better functioning condition.

Often people express the feeling of having less anxiety, and a sense of achievement at actually feeling and seeing these changes quite quickly. You'll notice that weight loss is only one benefit, and it's best to keep off the scales except for specific checkpoints. If you keep weighing yourself you become fixated on that single measure - which fluctuates day to day. This leads to unhelpful ups and downs in your motivation.

Rest assured that at the end of the 30-day nutrition program you will have a better body composition. Aside from the nutrition program, training results don't come so quickly and so easily. Once you have a better body composition then you can shift your focus to lowering your body age. The outcome of focusing on lowering your body composition will be a reduction in your bad weight (fat) and an increase in your good weight (muscle).

Here is something THAT YOU WON'T FIND ON GOOGLE. In my experience, you will start to get results from a well-designed fitness program according to this formula (in weeks from starting).

Number of weeks = (Your Age) / (Number of Times Each Week That You Go To Gym)

— So if you are 48 years old, and start going to gym 3 times each week, you will see "results" after 16 weeks - four months.

What does "results" mean? It means that it is about this time that someone - family, friend, colleague - says something about you looking better e.g. looking thinner, taller, healthier, stronger, more confident. This is important, because setting this expectation of the time needed takes the pressure off expecting results too soon, and being discouraged if you are not seeing early results.

✓ Give yourself time. With persistence the results will come.. The secret is persistence, not quantity.

2. Less Is More

Changing your habits is never easy, and when we finally take action to change we often overcommit ourselves. This then leads to disappointment when we are not able to fulfil our own expectations. The everyday example is New Year resolutions where people get gung ho only to burn out a few weeks later.

I've learnt that what works better is to underestimate and "under plan" what you will do when you start to exercise. Avoid extremes. Don't set out an exercise plan that takes two hours to complete. That will set you up for failure. Start with the basic few exercises or a class that you like, and be consistent in doing those. Remember that **the secret is consistency**, not quantity.

Add more later, or add variety, or find more specific classes or exercises that suit your goals. Add and subtract to hone in your needs. It is better to add later than to begin with more as inevitably people don't subtract, *they just give up altogether*.



This advice also applies to planning to spend too much time on one exercise, as well as trying to do too many exercises. Don't make the mistake of quickly committing yourself - in a burst of enthusiasm - to one hour on the walking machines for example. That's a poor use of your time and an ineffective approach to fitness and most likely to lead to disappointment. Better to do a class - Pilates, Body Pump, Spin, Body Balance, even Boxing (but read below). Get to know your body, and then add and subtract other exercises.

Cardio is not so much over-rated as **overdone** by most people, especially for those over 50. So often I see women in the cardio room running for an hour at a time, and doing little else. In particular, they do little strength training. They may play around on the gym machines for a while but that only adds to the negative outcomes of their training regime.

3. Cutting the Cardio and Hitting the High Intensity

The body is an amazing adaption* machine. If you run for long periods then it adapts to the need to optimise muscle weight and bone weight to the objective of surviving the distance. It does that by **reducing** muscle mass and bone mass. Take a second to think about that. Is that useful for women over 50?

No, it's not useful. It is actually **exactly the opposite** of what is desirable. And the same goes for men over 50 who also need to build functional muscle mass and bone density. Bone is living tissue, It adapts to resistance training by itself getting stronger, as do the tendons and ligaments engaged by strength training.

Additionally, what is missing from most cardio sessions is the repetitive healthy stress which results in increased muscle capacity and stamina. This stress is what is typically called interval training.

These days it is more popular to call interval training High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT). HIIT incorporates repeated bursts of intense exercise interspersed with periods of rest.

HIIT is a very efficient way to get the benefits of cardio and to ramp up stamina without decreasing muscle mass and bone density. Another big advantage is the shorter time commitment required. You can get far more benefit from 20 minutes of HIIT than 1 hour on the treadmill, and none of the disadvantages.

There are many types of HIIT. For example, the intense super-HIIT style which can deliver clear benefits with just 10 minutes of actual exercise work a week (30 seconds exercise X 20 with recovery of 3 to 4 minutes between each burst). This style just suits the mentality of a small proportion of gym goers as it requires super intense efforts and is very challenging. In fact you don't have to go to gym. Recent studies have shown that just six ten-second all-out sprints, spread throughout a week can improve aerobic fitness and blood-sugar control.



**Everything in the body reacts to the SAID Principle - specific adaption to imposed demand.*

Aerobic HIIT is at a lower intensity than super-HIIT and consists of 4 to 6 minute bursts with 1 to 3 minutes recovery. The objective is to exercise at 80-90% of your maximum aerobic exercise intensity. This won't save as much time as super-HIIT but it will deliver far more cardio benefits than a steady long spell on the treadmill. It also avoids the bone and muscle mass loss resulting from long cardio sessions.

3. Cutting the Cardio and Hitting the High Intensity cont ...

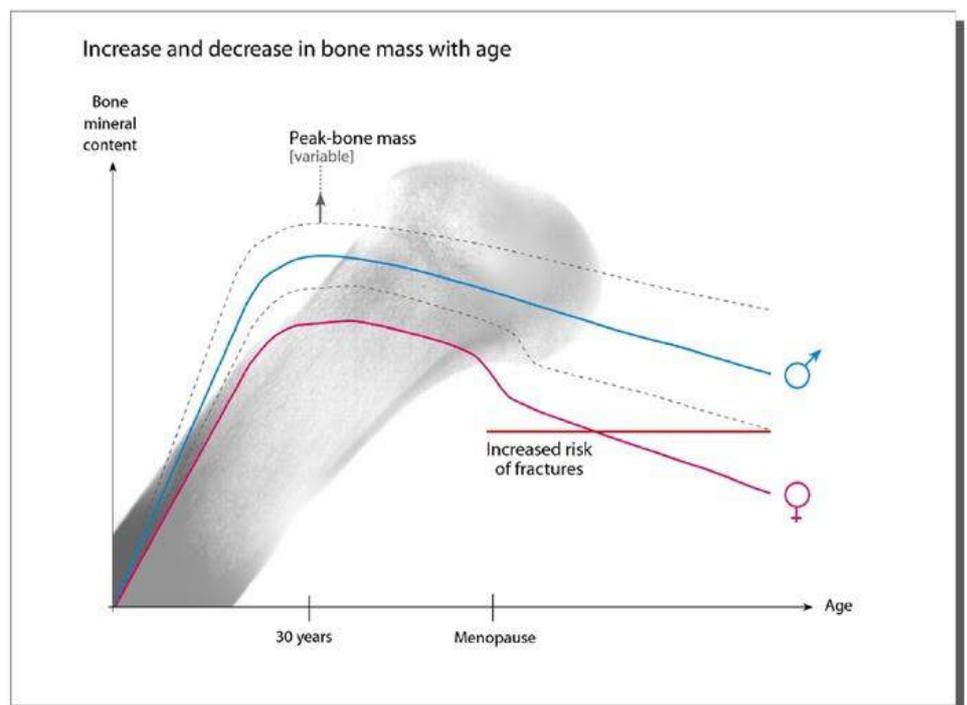
Finally, there is the Aerobic max-HIIT which is a compromise between the previous two types. It is lower intensity than super-HIIT and shorter session duration than aerobic HIIT. This requires eight to ten one-minute bouts performed at maximal aerobic exercise capacity, interspersed with 60 - 75 seconds of light recovery, therefore offering significant time advantages, with a single session taking around 20 minutes. The objective is to exercise at your maximum aerobic exercise intensity.

Here is the Secret

Here is the secret. Your body will **not adapt to HIIT by reducing your muscle mass nor your bone density**. While it will not necessarily increase your bone density - you need resistance training for that - it will increase your muscle mass in response to the increased metabolic demands of HIIT. HIIT will also increase your stamina.

As well as reducing your time on the treadmill the HIIT approach to exercise can substantially improve your aerobic fitness while providing a range of positive health outcomes, including no loss of bone density, better blood-sugar control, better blood pressure and better blood vessel function in a range of conditions such as obesity, metabolic syndrome, diabetes and heart disease. It has also been shown to reverse the effects of aging at the DNA level.

If you enjoy long runs or rides, then by all means continue to do them. But now that you are aware of the bone loss and muscle mass loss add resistance training into your daily schedule in order to avoid problems later in life. Even body weight exercises will make a positive difference.



While there are many diet fads each of these inevitably leads to people riding on a rollercoaster of weight loss and weight gain over periods of a year or more. Generally they end up where they started, or worse. A study of The Biggest Loser participants found that **most ended up heavier after 5 years** than when they began the program. The reason for this is because they cannot sustain the diet routine from the show as part of their *normal lifestyle*.

4. There Is No Best Diet For Long-term Weight Loss

Keto diets are all the rage and endorsed by the usual celebrity suspects all of whom are very unlikely to be following the diet and certainly not in 12 months time. Keto diets are a version of low-carb diets that have been about for a long time, including the Atkins diet. Ketones are the source of energy used by the body when it has to resort to burning fat. They are produced by the liver. Ketones are produced in weight loss regardless of the type of diet you are following. So, actually, anyone who is losing weight is actually on a keto diet.

It doesn't matter to your body whether the fat it's burning is from your existing reserves or from the high fat meal that you just ate. And the production of ketones **doesn't necessarily mean you are burning body fat**. The focus of how you go about burning body fat should be your exercise program, not your diet.

Weight loss isn't a temporary thing. It is a lifestyle change

At the other end of the carb-diet spectrum are the high-carb diets. High-carb diets generally come about inadvertently through the consumption of sugary drinks and snacks. These foods not only displace the proper balance of proteins and fats but are also known as "empty calories", which means they are low in nutritional value. This type of "diet" is able to be "maintained" but leads to obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

Dr Sara Seidelmann, a clinical and research fellow in cardiovascular medicine from Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, reviewed observational studies of 430,000 people and found that people on both low carb and high carb diets had a lower life expectancy than people on a balance diet.

Low-carb diets are popular for weight loss because they work quite well in the short term. However, both too much and too little carbohydrate can be harmful. But what counts most is the **type** of fat, protein, and carbohydrates eaten. Carbohydrates are required at the right level to meet short-term energy demands during physical activity and to maintain fat and protein intakes within their respective sweet spots.

Most people can't stick with a very low carbohydrate diet nor a high carbohydrate diet **for long**. The latest research shows that it's the **ability to stick to the diet** that matters. As always with weight loss, in the end it all comes down to taking less energy in than you burn. Try considering why you eat, rather than what you eat. Tackling convenience buying and emotional eating is **the key to successfully sustaining** a weight loss plan for most people. Eating high-quality, nutritious whole foods, unlimited vegetables, and avoiding flours, sugars, bad fats, and processed foods, has repeatedly been found to be the best and most sustainable diet.

Training at the "fat loss zone" has been embraced by people globally as their rationale for long periods of cardio at modest levels of effort. You now know, from Section 3 above, that this long cardio is intrinsically bad exercise for over 50s.

We've all heard about the "fat loss zone". We've all heard the advice that the best way to lose weight is to exercise in the fat loss zone, along these lines:

5. The Fat Loss Zone is a Myth

"If you want to lose weight then you need to do long, slow, steady-state aerobic exercise in the fat burning zone."

Guess what? That's entirely a myth. The fat burning zone exists, but it has been grossly misinterpreted. You **burn more fat by working harder**, fullstop.

The fat-burning zone advice goes like this: when you're working at about 55 to 70% of your maximum heart rate (max HR) (or, when you're putting in an effort of about a 5 or 6 on a scale of 1 to 10) then you will burn the most fat for your exercise time. The concept - as sold - is that the body burns a greater amount of fat at lower-intensity aerobic exercise than it does at higher intensities.

The reality is different. The body does indeed burn a greater percentage of fat at lower intensities than at higher intensities. At lower intensities, the body may burn 50 percent of the calories from fat, while at higher intensities it may only burn 35 percent. But at higher intensities you burn **way more total calories** — and more fat calories overall — than you do exercising at lower levels of intensity.

Your metabolism — or your resting metabolic rate — is what determines how many calories you burn each day. It is controlled by your thyroid and is largely a factor of muscle mass. Every kg of muscle you put on requires approximately 110 calories per day to maintain. Raising your metabolism is the real key to long-term fat loss and body change. To do this requires more muscle mass.

The key to achieving this is not aerobic training, because it only burns calories only while you are doing it.

In order to lose more fat during your training, and then maintain the fat burn, you need to raise the level of effort to 80 to 90% of your max HR, by interval training, and add muscle via strength training. Substitute the long, slow, steady-state training with some high-intensity intervals. I recommend starting with the Aerobic-HIIT from Section 3 above. This is five three minute sets of one minute at increased intensity followed by two minutes of recovery. During the one-minute interval, push your limit. In your recovery, take it down to a level where you can carry on a conversation. This workout takes less than 20 minutes and will have your metabolism stoked for burning fat during the rest of the day.

Also include weight training in your schedule to build muscle and keep lifting your resting metabolic rate. Perform a full-body workout twice a week. This should take less than an hour to do and will get your metabolism cranking. Forget the fat burning zone, it's a myth which will not serve you well.

6. Why You Should Not Use The Gym Machines

The most common first question I get asked by people at gym, besides "You look incredible, how do you keep so fit?" is "Why don't I ever see you on the gym machines?".

Answering this question is a bit of a dilemma for me. The people approaching me are people whom have seen me about the place for some time, and I've also usually noticed them. And what I've usually noticed is that (1) what they generally do won't get them the outcomes they expect, and (2) this includes mostly using the gym machines.

Since they are making the effort and putting in the time I don't want to discourage them. So I try a neutral answer. I say, "You know how gym machines focus on accentuating a specific muscle, well that makes you dysfunctional because your muscles work in teams. Being more dysfunctional means that you are more likely to injure yourself in daily life and more likely to fall over. If you fall over at our age, and are admitted to hospital, your life expectancy drops by about 5 years. I'm not so keen on any of those outcomes."

It is super important to know that your muscles don't work independently of your tendons and ligaments, and the latter take longer to strengthen and condition than your muscles. Machines focus on accentuating isolated muscle development making your muscles too strong for your tendons. This inevitably leads to injury. Furthermore, the isolated focus of the machine actually deprives you of the higher neurological conditioning of your brain and teams of muscles necessary for good balance and human movement.

Bodybuilders and competitive weightlifters use machines when they have exhausted the possibilities of building muscles with barbells. Machines allow them to isolate muscles and apply very high and very focused loads on specific muscles. **You don't need this.** You are never going to exhaust the potential of barbells for your strength and balance needs.

Just as a side-note, I am talking about gym machines that you sit on. There are great exercises that you can do using cable machines and your own balance which will improve your functional strength and coordination. But as a simple short general answer I say keep away from the gym machines.

You'll get far more productive results for healthy ageing, balance and body composition by moving to more body weight exercises, free standing weighted exercises e.g. barbells, kettlebells, TRX training, stability ball exercises, circuit training and interval training, and using aids like the boss ball. These will increase your coordinated body strength, your balance and functionality, increase your neural activation during exercise, and make it less likely that you will fall.



7. Strength Strategy For Aging Muscles

Saving the best to last, because, amazingly, **it is never too late to rebuild your muscularity.** ♥

As you age, you'll experience changes in your body from slower movement to reduced mental acuity. One of those changes will also include the deterioration of your muscles. In fact, physically inactive people can lose as much as 3% to 5% of their muscle mass each decade after age 30. In other words, we slowly lose muscle mass such that the size of our muscles at the age of 80 can be about half of what they were at 40.

This results in **more than just a loss of strength**, it also results in a loss of brain-body coordination via your neural network, and a higher likelihood that you will fall. If you fall and break a bone then your life expectancy drops by 5 years - a figure consistent between Australia, the US and the UK.

There is a way to prevent this from happening, and that is through exercise - resistance exercise.

Exercise increases the endurance of muscles making them less susceptible to strain and injury. Resistance exercise helps your muscles and bones maintain their mass and strength even at the age of 60, 70 or 80. Performing regular weight training into older age also increases strength and muscle bulk. In fact, weight training in older adults has been shown to increase hormone levels to an equivalent level to that of untrained younger adults.

Strength training will strengthen your muscles, bones, joints, tendons and ligaments through the use of weights - even simply your own body weight. I recommend that you avoid gym machines, see Section #6.



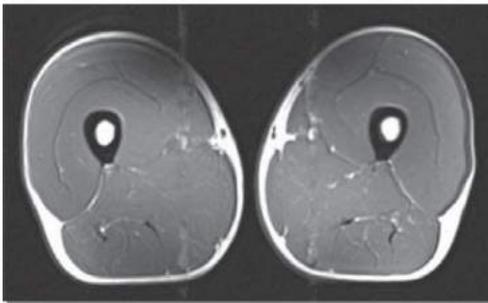
There are many benefits linked to strength exercises, for example:

7. Strength Strategy For Aging Muscles cont ...

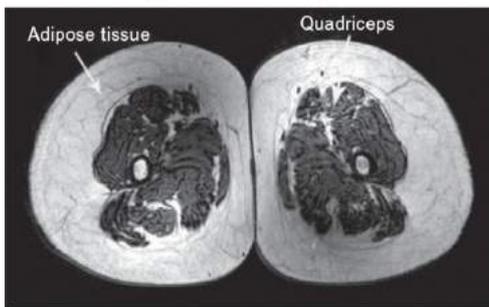
- Muscle strength. When your muscles are strong, you can easily do more things;
- With strength training, your muscles will get used to particular movements making them more resistant to pain. This works because your muscles, tendons and ligaments are better able to hold your joints in alignment and allow them to operate smoothly "as designed";
- Better body coordination. Because your muscles will be in tune with another, it's not going to be difficult to move around and do your normal daily chores;
- At the same time, even if you are in a static position, your muscles will not ache easily because balance and posture will be improved by the improved strength and endurance of your muscles;
- Keeps your body fit. When you get old, your metabolism also decreases, making it a lot easier for you to gain and store weight. Strength training fires up your muscles to keep burning calories even after you finish training, unlike cardio training (walking and running for example).

You should also be aware that there is more involved to strength than just your muscles. Tendons and ligaments are just as important. But your muscles don't work independently of your tendons and ligaments. And those tendons and ligaments take a lot longer to get stronger, and don't necessarily react well to the same methods that increases the size of your muscles.

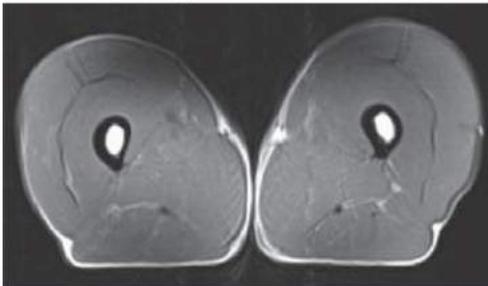
40-year-old triathlete



74-year-old sedentary man



70-year-old triathlete



if you train your muscles to be out of balance with your tendons and ligaments, for instance **by using the gym machines**, then you **risk injury**. The most common exercise injuries are to ligaments and tendons, not muscles. You need to get professional advice about the correct form of all resistance exercises, including bodyweight exercises. Ninety percent of people I see exercising in the gym have poor form and incomplete range of movement. This not only limits your benefits but can also increase the risk of injury.

Training your tendons and ligaments to be stronger means training through the very FULL range of motion, applying loaded stretching, and moving in other ways than the basic weight lifting lifts. Every joint needs to be stronger in every direction it can travel. Your shoulders and hips can move in a hell of a lot more directions than those used in bench press and squats. Applying this is all part of effective strength training.

Finally, if you need any more motivation than take a look at the images on the left. The top set is a 40 year old triathlete, showing a cross section of their thigh muscles. The middle set is an inactive 74 year old man, and the bottom set a 74 year old triathlete. This should inspire you by knowing that you CAN rebuild your lost muscles and recover your ability to live longer more actively.

Contact



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How can I help you live longer independently?

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We usually wait until a potentially catastrophic trigger compels us to act and to exercise regularly. This is understandable. But exercise is not optional if you want to live your best life as long as possible as independently as possible. And what you might have done at 40 will not work for you at 60 or 70 or 80. Start now, do it properly, and enjoy it.

— Walter Adamson

These simple tests tell you
how well you are aging - [take the test](#)

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