

Bodywise Senior Exercise Program



Funded by the DC Office of Aging, the Institute of Gerontology runs the Bodywise exercise program, specifically designed to promote health, wellness, fitness and prevention knowledge for DC residents 60 years and older. Bodywise consists of water, stretch, walk and chair exercise classes. Each of these activities includes a health education component covering topics such as: the use of over-the counter drugs and prescription medication, blood pressure screening and the benefits of exercise for certain physical problems. The program also offers other opportunities for learning and socializing. By participating in the program, some of the benefits that may be achieved include: an increase in participant's cardiovascular efficiency, muscular strength, flexibility, and overall life satisfaction.

CAUSES research assistant Arielle Gerstein spoke with three senior citizens and long-time participants of the low-impact aerobics class: Marianne Huy, Anita Velta and Beverly



Hongfincher. They all agree that the benefit other than the physical effects is that the classes get them up and going in the morning. It's also keeps up their spirit and gives them the opportunity to socialize. A group of women from the low-impact aerobics class get coffee after class regularly. There is a board for the Bodywise program that meets every two months to decide how to improve the program.

Beverly says, "Each teacher brings something different." All the students feel grateful for the teachers and the opportunity to participate in this program.

Liliane Weinrob has been taking yoga for four years through the program. She also takes spin and gymnastics. She loves the social aspect of the classes and her only complaint is the classes aren't offered more frequently. June Humbert, a fellow yoga participant, describes yoga as "very good for body and mind." Celestine Brown has been taking yoga for 15 years because it helps with her back problems. She says it's "keeping me going."



Low-impact aerobics and yoga are taught on the UDC campus, taught by Ms. Andrea Christie. In 2006, Ms. Christie attended the Paving Access Trails for Higher Security (PATHS) program at the University of District of Columbia. Dr. Antonia Nowell, Director of the PATHS program, was very instrumental in encouraging, and supporting Andrea's entrepreneurial efforts and as a result of this support, Ms. Christie received a grant to finance a Yoga Teacher Training course. Ms. Christie attended DC Yoga of Washington DC under the direction of "Narayan" Fredrick Rathweg and earned her Teacher's Training Certification in 2007. Andrea has been teaching classes and continues to share pertinent health and wellness information to help others live a healthier lifestyle and enhance the quality of life through the practice of Yoga regardless of economic background.

Another popular exercise class is 'chair & movement,' which teaches seniors how to exercise from their seats and sometimes wheelchairs. Ms. Tawana Talley-Cooper has been a Bodywise instructor for 22 years and teaches six classes a week at various locations throughout the District. When asked why she enjoyed teaching seniors, she explained it not only was for the knowledge and wisdom, but as she gets older, she has a better idea of what like is like when she reaches the age of some of her students. She explains:

"Teaching fitness is like a dose of medicine. I'm 58 years old and have never been on any medication or had health problems, so I look at Bodywise as a blessing, not a job. There is no negative working for UDC or the Bodywise program."

She adds: "There's an exercise to fit everybody's age group and physicality; I just want to relay that to people."

Class participants understand the significance of having access to this cost-free, exercise program. "Where you may not need some of the services she's written about, you may know someone who does, and who may be isolated without access to the information," reminds Robinette Livingston, coordinator for this site.



While seniors can participate in the classes free of charge, the following eligibility criteria must be met. Participants must:

- Be a resident of the District of Columbia
- Be 60 years of age or older
- Complete an Application form
- Obtain a Medical Release form executed and signed by his/her physician (must be done annually)

Bodywise was featured on "Good Morning, Saudi - watch the [short video here](#). For more information about the Bodywise program and how to join, please visit the Institute of Gerontology's [webpage](#).