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HEADLINE: Fitness over 50 can ease decline that comes with age

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Someone turns 50 every seven seconds, and lack of physical activity accounts for approximately 50 percent of the physical decline usually associated with aging. Much of this decline can be avoided with some proactive measures. Here are some common physical developments to watch out for and the measures you can take today to be fit over 50.

. Risks. Yes, it can happen to you: reduced muscle mass, strength, endurance, coordination, balance, flexibility and bone strength. There is increased potential for higher fat levels, blood pressure, depression, disease and potential for a stroke. What cannot happen is recovery or prevention of these declines from inactivity.

. Rewards. Reverse all the risks and add longer and increased quality of life.

. Muscles. These beauties decrease in size and fiber as you age. The types of muscles most affected are the ones that govern strength and speed. Adopt a strength-training program that targets all muscle groups to provide the structure of a healthy, active body. Exercise machines are suggested for those who are just beginning or need to build strength before branching out to free weights and medicine and/or fitness balls.

. Bones. Osteoporosis, decreased bone density, is a word too many women over 50 know. Lifting weights has been shown to be the most effective method of reversing and preventing osteoporosis.

. Heart and lungs. Keeping these vital organs strong can be achieved only through aerobic activity. Activity that raise your heart rate to about 70 percent of its maximum target range is key. Research has shown that even though the time needed to maintain cardio-respiratory fitness increases over 50, the physical benefits gained are similar to younger individuals.

. Joints. Regular movement keeps joints supple and healthy, even in those with arthritis.

. Body-fat levels. Too much body fat is directly associated with a range of diseases, making fitness over 50 just as important as all ages.

It is never too late to get moving and get fit. Your health is at stake. Consult www.aarp.org for more information.

Yvette Craddock is the managing member of ***Click Marketing Solutions*** (www.click-marketing.net). Her column is written with professionals at ***Gold's Gym***. Contact any of the five Valley locations at 1-888-GOLDS-15 or www.goldsgym.com.

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Highlights: Phoenix, PHOENIX, Yvette Craddock, Click Marketing Solutions, Gold's Gym