Being flexible and fit is a winning combination for any age, but as we get older, it becomes even more important for us to maintain our flexibility. Not only can it make us feel better – more alert and confident – but it also can reduce our chances of injury and diseases associated with "old age" such as chronic back pain, curvature of the spine and osteoporosis.

The recipe for a more flexible you is simple – and probably not too surprising – diet and exercise. Only a regular exercise program allows older people to maintain, or even increase their strength, flexibility and stamina. In addition, the right diet helps ensure those healthy muscles and strong bones stay in working order.

The following are two tips to get you started:

**Begin a stretching program**

Flexibility is simply the range of motion of a joint. As you get older, your joints are less flexible and performing stretching exercises becomes increasingly important. Lengthen your muscles with gentle stretches and you’ll move easier and feel better. You’ll also find that stretching is a natural relaxing sensation that can relieve tension, alleviate pain and reduce muscle soreness.

**Make sure your diet includes calcium and iron**

Calcium is critical for flexible muscles. An inadequate supply results in tightness and cramps. Calcium also maintains your spinal cord's flexibility, helping to prevent osteoporosis. Sources of calcium include dairy products, leafy green vegetables and small fish like sardines. Iron is also critical because it plays a key role in carrying oxygen to your muscles and other organs. Find your iron in red meat and eggs, as well as tofu, beans and cereals.

Weak muscles and limited stamina are not inevitable. In fact, many of those aches and pains supposedly due to aging are actually the outcome of sedentary living. So get out of that chair. And start a flexibility fitness program that you can enjoy today and well into the later decades of your life. What a way to live!