ACSM’s Strategic Health Initiative (SHI) on Aging Presents:

Exercising Safely

1) Most People Can and Should Exercise

Who should NOT exercise —
• anyone with an unstable medical condition should get their doctor’s OK first.
• Injury may require waiting for healing — listen to your body and your doctor.
• If you have cardiac, pulmonary, or metabolic disease you may exercise, but only after seeing your doctor and then starting in a supervised environment.

2) Getting Started (two ways)

• start slowly in moderation: endurance exercise: simply walk a little further than you normally do and progress to walking further and faster as the weeks and months pass; strength exercise: lift a weight that you are used to lifting but do it more times than you normally do and gradually progress to lifting the weight 15 times.
• start aggressively: with endurance or strength exercise at a vigorous level; see your doctor first and then an exercise professional for screening tests and program advice.

3) Listening to Your Body

• you should always be able to catch your breath and speak comfortably while exercising.
• you should sense effort, maybe some discomfort, but never pain.
• learn to use the Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale (see the NIA Guidelines).
• always remember to warm up (start slowly) and cool down (stop gradually).

4) Who Can Help: Check with an Exercise Professional who...

• can teach you which exercises to do and how intensely to do them.
• has a college degree, usually in Exercise Sciences, but maybe in another health field.
• is certified by a credible organization (e.g., ACSM, APTA) and may have special training to work with older adults.
• Be Careful — the Exercise Industry is Not Well-regulated. Ask Questions.
• Exercise can usually be done with little risk or expense; the biggest risk is not starting.
• Start the program slowly, and when in doubt, ask questions.
• After learning to exercise safely you will wonder why you waited so long to start!