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## Seniors shape up

They're walking around indoor shopping malls, attending fitness classes in church basements, persuading hotels to let them use their swimming pools and taking up cross-country skiing and tennis. Now more than ever, Canada's senior citizens are getting into shape.

Peggy Edwards, manager of the Canadian Public Health Association's fitness secretariat, told a recent convention of the American Public Health Association that twice as many Canadians aged 55 to 64 were participating in sports today than in 1976.

Citing preliminary figures from a new Canadian fitness survey, Miss Edwards reported that three times as many people aged 65 and over were trying out sports.

The survey of 14 000 households with occupants aged 7 to 70 indicated not only that more elderly people participated in a sport at least once annually, but that there was a dramatic increase in the number of senior citizens engaged in some form of exercise, such as walking or calisthenics, in the month before being questioned.

But she suggested that many seniors still needed to change their attitudes towards exercise.

"Many exaggerate the value of what they do. Older women say they get enough exercise doing housework, for example, but housework isn't enough.

"Others feel now that they're retired, it's time to take it easy. In fact, the opposite is true and physical activity increases in importance as we get older."

Ms. Edwards cited a study by Dr. Roy Shepherd of the University of Toronto which showed that a group of 38 people over 65 functioned as if they were 20 years younger after only seven weeks of exercise.

Study participants did an hour of exercise four times a week, including 30 minutes of walking fast enough to quicken their heart rates and 30 minutes of light exercise done to music.

They quickly increased their aerobic power — functioning of the cardiovascular system — by an average of 30 per cent. After a year their bones and muscles were stronger, body fat had decreased, and their moods had improved.

### Exercise book for the over-50s

A new exercise guide, designed specifically for seniors, has been launched by Canada's Fleet Publishers. *The Ageless Exercise*

*Plan: A Complete Guide to Fitness After Fifty* by Dr. Charles Godfrey and Michael Feldman is one of the first such guides written for seniors.

Dr. Godfrey, director of Rehabilitation Medicine at Wellsley Hospital in Toronto and Mr. Feldman, a fitness consultant, have included numerous simple and basic exercise routines (along with accompanying photographs) which seniors can easily perform in the privacy of their own home.

Hip and leg exercises, pelvic tilts, ankle exercises and hamstring stretching are some of the routines in the alternate ageless exercise chapter of the book. In the advanced exercise chapter, the authors include side stretching, sit-ups, leg and arm swings and facial muscles exercises.

In these exercises, the authors say the emphasis is placed on the development of joint flexibility and muscle power which will be sufficient for the specific demands made on the body while exercising.

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## New device aids weak hearts

A new ultra-sound device to boost the performance of a weak or ailing heart could be on the market within two years, says a National Research Council (NRC) medical engineer who helped develop it.

According to Dr. George Forester, the NRC will work with Ottawa's foremost heart surgeon, Dr. Wilbert Keon, to develop a prototype of the device. Called a "cardiac enhancer", it shoots low-energy sound waves at specific areas of the heart, warming the tissue slightly.

"What we think is happening is that heating one microscopic structure of the heart more than other portions affects the heart cycle itself," said Dr. Forester. "For instance, it may be acting on the transfer of calcium across heart membranes (calcium is involved in the control of heart contractions). Its effect would be similar to having a shot of adrenalin, but without affecting the bloodstream and the rest of the body."

Because ultra-sound can be directed at a specific area of an organ, heart specialists will not have to worry about negative effects on other organs.

"We wouldn't have to worry about using drugs whose levels would be toxic to other organs," he continued.

The technology could be used with heart drugs, by itself or as part of treatment for severe heart problems.

"One area where we see it being used is to wean a patient off a heart-lung machine," Dr. Forester said.

"It could also have applications during the critical period of fibrillation — when a failing heart has been 'shocked back to life'. We find that the heart recovers at an accelerated rate with ultra-sound."

The NRC, which has patented the technique, became involved in the research almost by accident. In the past, its medical engineering section concentrated mainly on setting standards for the use of ultra-sound and investigating its use in diagnostics. "We've very excited about this discovery," said Dr. Forester. "It could turn into something very important in terms of therapy."

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## Funds for Inuit studies at Montreal's McGill University

The Inuit of northern Alaska have established a chair at McGill University in Montreal to advance knowledge about the North and its people.

It is the first university chair ever funded by an Inuit community, and it is named after the late Inuit leader Eben Hopson. Over the next five years, the North Slope Borough will endow McGill with \$500 000 for research pertaining to Inuit interests and scholarships for Inuit students.

### First recipients

The first two scholarship recipients are Ulla Lyngge and Sivart Larsen, both Greenlandic Inuit now enrolled at McGill in English and northern studies courses. They are the first students from Greenland to attend McGill and are among the very few Greenlandic Inuit ever to venture into a North American university.

Eben Hopson was a one-time whaling captain and construction worker who became an influential political and religious leader in Alaska's most northern community, Barrow. Throughout his life Hopson strove to reaffirm common historic roots among Inuit now living in Alaska, northern Canada, Greenland and Siberia. As founder of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference in 1977, Hopson sought to establish policies, principles and positions in matters affecting Inuit. The new McGill chair will further the work he began.

The North Slope Borough representatives said they felt the McGill chair would set a precedent for a new period of cooperation between people of the North and southern universities.