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Exercise Motivation



10 minutes here and there

Good news for people who can't find long stretches of time to exercise: Taking four 10-minute walks a day may be better for lowering blood pressure than one 40-minute walk.

In one study of people with pre-hypertension, the blood-pressure lowering benefits of walking lasted 11 hours for those who took four short walks, compared to seven hours among those who walked 40 minutes all at once.

Source: *Journal of Hypertension*, Vol. 24, pg. 1761, September 2006

Making excuses can be a good thing

Many people have no problem finding reasons why they can't or don't exercise more. "I can't go for a walk because I'm too tired." "I don't want to try an aerobics class because I might hurt myself."

It's time that making excuses becomes a positive — for you and your health. Instead of justifying your lack of physical activity, think of why you should get up and get moving.

Tell yourself, I will exercise today because...

- **It will improve my heart health.**
- **It may reduce my risk of cancer.**
- **It may make me look better.**
- **It will strengthen my bones.**
- **It may help me feel proud of myself.**
- **It will help me become stronger.**
- **It will reduce my chances of getting Type 2 diabetes.**
- **It will help me reduce my health-care costs.**
- **It may boost my metabolism.**
- **It will make my clothes fit better.**
- **It will improve my cholesterol levels.**
- **It is a way for me to take care of myself.**
- **It is cheap entertainment.**
- **It may help me sleep better at night.**
- **I want to be stronger than my excuses.**

A beginner's *5-step* strategy for getting in shape



Does the thought of starting an exercise routine seem overwhelming? The key: Take it slow and go. Every step forward counts.

Step 1: Visit with your health-care provider and let him or her know that you would like to start exercising and what you would like to do. You want to make sure you're healthy enough for your planned activity.

Step 2: Find someone who will support you with your goals and new lifestyle. Maybe it's a personal trainer, significant other, family member, friend, or co-worker. Having support may increase your chances of sticking with your new, healthful habits.

Step 3: Begin with a low-intensity activity, such as walking or swimming, and start slowly. Low intensity is best judged by being able to carry on a conversation or not being breathless.

Step 4: Be consistent with your exercise efforts. Strive for most days of the week. Figure out when each day you'll work out. Make sure you have backup plans should something come up (*bad weather, travel, etc.*).

Step 5: Increase the intensity of your workouts about every six weeks by picking up the pace and adding time.

Questions to ask before starting an exercise program

If you want to begin exercising regularly, stop to ask yourself some questions.

- Have you been told you have a heart condition and should only participate in physical activity recommended by a doctor?
- Do you feel pain (or discomfort) in your chest when physically active? When you aren't participating in physical activity? While at rest, do you frequently experience fast, irregular heartbeats or very slow beats?
- Do you ever become dizzy and lose your balance, or lose consciousness? Have you fallen more than twice in the past year?
- Do you have a bone or joint problem that physical activity could worsen? Do you have pain in your legs or buttocks when you walk?
- Do you take blood pressure or heart medications?
- Do you have any cuts or wounds on your feet that don't heal?
- Have you experienced unexplained weight loss in the past six months?
- Do you know of any reason why you shouldn't participate in physical activity?

If you answered "no" to these questions, you likely can safely participate in at least moderate-intensity physical activity (*what you can do relatively comfortably for up to 60 minutes*). If you answered "yes" to any of the questions, check with your health-care provider before beginning to exercise.

Source: American Council on Exercise

MOTIVATION

A national expert shares his philosophy

Cedric Bryant, the chief science officer for the American Council on Exercise, suggests that people should ask themselves these three fundamental questions about exercise:

- **Does exercise make me feel more energetic?**
- **Am I in a better mood?**
- **Do I cope with things better when I exercise?**

How much, how long, and how often are the wrong questions. It's better to be satisfied with small steps and concern

yourself with whether what you are doing is safe.

In Bryant's view, perceived lack of time is the number one barrier to exercise. "Notice I say 'perceived' lack of time, because we always find time for the things we value."