



The Importance of Exercise

HAVE YOU HEARD

Being sedentary, not exercising or being physically active can result in the following devastating conditions:

- *Cancer* - studies have shown that fitness enthusiastic men and women who are physically active have a 30 to 40 percent lower risk of colon cancer compared to individuals who are inactive.
- *Diabetes* - lack of exercise reduces muscles' ability to use insulin. Diabetes is considered the "sedentary disease" which is striking people at an alarming rate. If it is not controlled, it can destroy the body's organs.
- *Heart* - lack of consistent physical activity, over time, decreases the function of the heart muscle and affects the blood vessels, including the large aortic artery to the veins and small capillaries. According to many studies, scientists have good reason to believe that regular exercise protects the heart.
- *Stroke* - regular exercisers are 25% less likely to have a stroke than their sedentary counterparts. Being fit lowers blood pressure, raises HDL cholesterol and reduces the risk of blood clots.
- *Brain* - people who are physically active, according to solid evidence, are at lower risk for cognitive decline and dementia.
- *Muscles* - if you don't exercise on a regular basis, you are at risk of losing some 6 percent of your muscles mass every decade of life from the age of 30 on. This also translates into a 10 - 15 percent loss of strength per decade. Once again, if you don't use the muscle, you will lose the muscle quickly.
- *Osteoporosis* - fragile bones cause more than 1.5 million fractures each year in the U.S. Bone is like muscle, if you stress it, it responds. If you don't, you gradually lose its strength, and increase your chances of breaking them. Regular weekly strength training can help prevent osteoporosis, and decrease your chances of breaking a bone.

- *Mental health* - people who don't exercise on a regular basis are more prone to develop depression. According to a recent study, people who were more active were nearly 20 percent less likely to be diagnosed with depression over the next five years than less active people. Fitness conscious individuals also generally display improved self esteem, or self image.
- *Weight* - if you are inactive year in and year out, you will eventually gain weight and lose fitness which increases the chance of a heart attacks, and diabetes.
- *Immune system* - moderate amounts of exercise reduces the risk of upper respiratory infection. Regular exercise may boost immune function.

EXCUSES AND SOLUTIONS

Although there may be progress in changing people' s eating habits, there are not the corresponding significant changes in weight, body fat percent or body mass index measurements. The conclusion . . . people are not exercising.

It' s often easier for people to make changes to their diet and eating habits than to incorporate exercise into their daily routines. In fact, most people will tell you that eating right and taking exercise are important parts of a healthy lifestyle, but the reality is, it seems, that most practise neither.

When active people are asked what makes them exercise, rarely do they mention health benefits as the reason. Most say they exercise because it makes them feel good. So it seems that emotion, not information, drives lifestyle choices.

Look at the following excuses for not exercising. Do any of these apply to us? Then consider the suggested solutions and get exercising!!

• *Lack of time*

Many people think they can't find time in their busy schedules to exercise. Think about the amount of time you spend watching TV. Schedule your exercise time. If you can't find a full 30 minutes during your day, break it up into 10 or 15 minute segments.

• *Fatigue*

We all get tired from our jobs and other activities of the day. If you exercise regularly, you will have more energy and feel less tired all the time. You'll have energy for the things you like to do as well as for the things you have to do.

• *Perception about adequate exercise*

Some people who don't exercise regularly feel they get enough exercise in their daily jobs and routines. But most jobs, including housework, do not provide enough exercise to keep the body fit.

• *Difficulty getting started*

I'll start tomorrow but tomorrow never comes. You don't have to change your life overnight. Start with small goals. Decide you'll get up 10 minutes early to walk or lift weights. Over time, you can increase your workout routine. For now, just worry about making exercise a daily habit.

• *Fear of pain*

Exercise should not be painful. If you feel sore you are working too hard. Start gradually and slowly work up to your desired fitness level.

• *Dislike of exercise*

Do what you enjoy. If you hate running, you don't have to do it. Find activities that match your personality. If you love the outdoors, go hiking or biking.

• *Difficulty staying motivated*

You've tried to exercise but you keep quitting. People often quit because they schedule too many workouts, work too hard and/or don't give themselves rest days. If you are getting bored change your routine every 4 to 6 weeks.

• *Can't afford a gym membership*

You don't have to join a gym to exercise. You can walk anytime, anywhere. Exercise balls, workout videos, dumbbells and trampettes are cheap and can be used for a variety of exercises.

• *Changes in weight and shape take too long*

You don't put weight on overnight and it won't come off overnight. Give your body time to react. It could take up to 12 weeks before you start seeing some real changes. In the meantime, try to enjoy the other benefits of exercise.

• *Taking time away from family*

You don't have to neglect your family to fit in exercise. Take family walks or bike rides. Play catch in the back yard. Show your family the importance of physical activity by being a good role model.