

WHY SHOULD I EXERCISE?

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Because I said so - well - it worked when we were kids, didn't it?

There is no doubt that exercise is good for all of us - walking, running, swimming, and resistance training (ie. exercise tubing and hand weights) just to name a few.

These activities benefit our heart, lungs, muscles, circulation and even our bone density.

Walking is good too.

Yes, walking is probably one of the best activities you can do with multiple benefits:

- Strengthens your legs and hip muscles.
- Improves how your heart pumps and your lungs function.
- Enhances your bone density - in other words helps to prevent osteoporosis.

And what else?

Check with your health care professional and ask for recommendations, or a program of exercises for your upper body. This will enhance your strength and muscle tone as well as increase the bone density of your arms. Not only are hip fractures of concern as we get older, but broken wrists are as well. (When your health care professional refers to a "broken" bone this is the same as a "fracture").

But I have arthritic knees...

This is a common concern voiced by patients in the clinic - but there is a solution. Check out your local swimming pool.

- Go for a swim - it is a good 'cardio' exercise and is easy on your knees and hips.
- Join a water aerobics exercise class. Many of these classes are in the deep end of the pool - but not to worry - you will wear a water belt so you will float upright. It allows resistance type exercises of both your lower and upper body but also will help with your heart and lungs.
- Run in the water - you can wear a floatation belt and pretend to run in the deep end of your local pool. This technique is often used to rehabilitate a runner who has sustained a stress fracture in the foot or lower leg from running too many miles. Alternatively, you could 'run' in the shallow end of the pool - easy on the joints but still a good workout for your heart, lungs and leg muscles.

Are there other options?

Tai Chi, yoga, elderobics, and stretch and tone classes are all examples.

It is most important that you pick an activity or exercise that you enjoy so that you will do it on a consistent basis. To illustrate this, it is generally felt that only 20% of patients continue with prescribed exercises beyond a six month time frame.

So how much is enough?

Generally, 30 minutes of exercise on a daily basis is considered the benchmark for physical activity. Regular exercise helps your heart and lungs, bone density (preventing osteoporosis) and help you manage conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes. But a recent study published in the medical journal Lancet (August 2011), indicates that people can still benefit with even just 15 minutes of exercise each day. That is less than 2 hours a week that you should invest in your health. For ideas check out www.fitin15.ca This is a website which I helped design for the Canadian Chiropractic

Association.

Another rule of thumb I use with my patients is that their focus should be on completing one month of their new exercise program---that is the hardest part. After one month I find that most patients are getting in the habit of doing their exercises on a regular basis.

So what is the 30-60-90 rule?

These are the amounts of cumulative physical activity that you should strive for on a daily basis. The old 'adage' of 30 minutes of sustained physical activity, three times a week, is no longer the benchmark that it once was.

If you are a person with a body weight that is considered normal, you need 30 minutes each and every day of cumulative activity.

However, if you wish to control your weight (which most people list as one of their health goals) you need 60 minutes of cumulative physical activity on a daily basis.

However if you want to lose a few pounds, and then sustain your new body weight, then you need 90 minutes in total, each and every day.

Of course, it is also important to look carefully at your diet and ensure that all your basic nutritional needs are being met. If you have any questions in this regard, consult with a local dietician or a nutritionist.

Caveat (Caution)!

These guidelines are just that - guidelines. Everyone is different and each person has their own unique set of health issues and physical attributes that can create challenges. So always check with your health care professional to see what is an appropriate type of physical activity or exercise program for you. That way you can establish a set of your own personal exercise or fitness guidelines.

Just remember - the first step, rep or stretch is always the hardest!

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