

# Exercise Is Medicine!

Exercise is your best investment in overall health. Being active just 30 minutes most days of the week has more health benefits than many medications. Here's why exercise really can be considered *The Fountain of Youth!*

Physical activity has multiple benefits. It improves memory and learning, lowers stress and insulin levels in your body, improves the overall function of your heart and lungs and improves your overall sleep quality.

Research shows that exercise helps treat and prevent more than 40 chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, cancer and hypertension.



Health professionals say "sitting is the new smoking." Some activity is always better than none!

## Regular exercise can:

- Reduce mortality and the risk of recurrent breast cancer by about 50%<sup>1</sup>
- Lower the risk of colon cancer by more than 60%<sup>2</sup>
- Reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's by about 40%<sup>3</sup>
- Reduce the incidence of high blood pressure and heart disease by about 40%<sup>4,5</sup>
- Lower the risk of stroke by 27%<sup>6</sup>
- Reduce the incidence of diabetes by about 50%<sup>7,8</sup>
- Decrease depression as effectively as Prozac or behavioral therapy<sup>9</sup>

## For substantial health benefits:

- Adults should do at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity.
- For additional health benefits, increase your activity to 300 minutes a week of moderate intensity, or 150 minutes a week of vigorous intensity activity.
- Aerobic activity should be performed in episodes of at least 10 minutes and preferably, it should be spread throughout the week.
- Always check with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

## Moderate Exercise

Leads to faster breathing and increased heart rate. Activities include walking fast, vacuuming, biking at a casual pace, playing doubles tennis or mowing the lawn with a push mower.

## Vigorous Exercise

Leads to very hard breathing and rapid heartbeat and should make it hard to have a conversation comfortably. Activities include running, swimming laps, playing basketball, riding a bike on hills.

Perform muscle-strengthening activities that involve all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms) 2 or more days a week. There are many ways you can strength train, such as lifting weights, working with resistance bands, doing heavy gardening, and doing exercises that use your body weight for resistance, such as push-ups.

Recommendations for healthy pregnant women and those who have recently had a baby are to perform 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity a week, preferably spread out to reduce the risk of injury. Avoid exercises that require lying on your back after the first trimester, as well as anything that increases the risk of falling or abdominal trauma.

### Older adults should be physically active as their abilities and conditions allow:

- If you are at risk for falling, do exercises that maintain or improve balance at least 2 days a week
- Important: Be sure to understand whether and how any of your medical conditions may affect your ability to do regular physical activity safely. Don't do exercises that cause pain!

### Here are some tips to stay moving:

- **Steal some steps!** Whenever you can, take a few hundred steps. Park farther away from the entrance at work or when out shopping. Visit the restroom at the other end of your office building. Take the stairs,

not the elevator. Get off the bus or T a stop early. Get up and walk for a few minutes every 30 minutes you're sitting down at work. Small changes can add up over time. Move faster if you are looking to burn more calories and strengthen your legs.

- **Explore.** Going outside means you're more likely to be in motion – and it can also improve your mood. Check out nearby parks, hiking trails, lakes or wherever your happy place may be. If it's raining or snowing outside, check out a nearby mall!
- **For the couch potato:** See if it's possible to position a treadmill or stationary bike in front of the television.
- **Find a friend.** Accountability is key. Walk while you talk, go for a run, play golf, or explore nearby exercise classes with a friend! You'll squeeze movement in and continue to enjoy those conversations with loved ones.
- **Exercise-friendly office spaces.** Many employers are looking for ways to get their employees to exercise more. Here are some things you can consider to promote creativity and productivity at work:
  - o Propose walking meetings instead of usual sit-down ones
  - o Participate in a 5k race, or play soccer or softball as a company team
  - o Consider incorporating a quick walk into lunch breaks

### References

<sup>1</sup> Physical activity and survival after breast cancer diagnosis. Holmes MD et al. *JAMA* 2005; 293:2479.

<sup>2</sup> Physical activity and colon cancer: confounding or interaction? *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*: June 2002 - Volume 34 - Issue 6 - pp 913-919.

<sup>3</sup> Exercise is associated with reduced risk for incident dementia among persons 65 years of age and older. Larsen EB et al. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 2006; 144:73-81.

<sup>4</sup> Cardiorespiratory fitness is an independent predictor of hypertension incidence among initially normotensive healthy women. Barlow CE et al. *Am J Epidemiol* 2006; 163:142-50.

<sup>5</sup> Exercise in the prevention of coronary heart disease: today's best buy in public health. *Med Sci Sports Exerc.* 1994 Jul;26(7):807-14.

<sup>6</sup> Physical activity and risk of stroke in women. *JAMA.* 2000 Jun 14;283(22):2961-7.

<sup>7</sup> The association between cardiorespiratory fitness and impaired fasting glucose and type 2 diabetes mellitus in men. Wei M et al. *Annals of Internal Medicine.* 1999; Jan 19;130(2):89-96.

<sup>8</sup> Reduction in the incidence of type 2 diabetes with lifestyle intervention or metformin. DPP Research Group. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2002; 346:393-403. The Diabetes Prevention Program Research Group: Within-trial cost-effectiveness of lifestyle intervention or metformin for the primary prevention of type 2 diabetes. DPP Res Group. *Diab Care* 2003; 26:2518.

<sup>9</sup> Exercise treatment for depression: efficacy and dose response. Dunn A et al. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 2005 Jan;28(1):1-8.



# Synergy Private Health