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WIC Worksite Wellness Newsletter

Live Actively!

Our Final Issue

Incorporate physical activity into your daily routine

We all hear that regular exercise is a key part of maintaining good health, but not all of us are aware of the many reasons why being physically active is so important. Often exercise is discussed only with regard to weight loss or weight maintenance, but there are many other benefits to an active lifestyle, some of which may surprise you.

It is common knowledge that engaging in physical activity is a great way to keep off extra pounds. Less well known are other health and wellness benefits that are a result of regular exercise—and scientists seem to be discovering more of these benefits all the time.

Benefits of exercise are both physical and mental. Men and women who spend 2 to 2.5 hours per week in moderately intense activity have a lower risk of dying from all causes. They are less likely to develop type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cardiovascular disease than sedentary individuals. Physical activity is even associated with a drop in the development of several types of cancer, including colon, breast, lung, and ovarian cancers. Exercise also improves muscle and bone health, reducing risk of fractures.

The mental benefits are also significant. Even low doses of physical activity seem to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety disorders. And the brain

appears to benefit from exercise, keeping the mind sharp as we age.

Most recently, researchers have found that physical activity may not only keep the mind from aging, but it might also slow other aspects of aging. In a recent animal study, exercising mice not only outlived their inactive counterparts, their muscles were stronger—including their hearts—and there was even less graying of their hair!

How much exercise is enough?

The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend at least 150 minutes of moderately intense physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity each week for adults. Children should spend a minimum of 60 minutes every day. Exercise episodes should ideally occur several times over the week and should last more than ten minutes.

Does the kind of activity matter?

Physical activity should be aerobic in nature, requiring the lungs and heart to work harder and increased oxygen intake.

Some examples of aerobic activities include running, dancing, and swimming, but there are many others—think of activities that make your heart thump and increase your breathing. Strength-building



exercise, such as weightlifting, is also beneficial, but should be combined with aerobic activities.

Despite knowing that exercise is good for us, many Americans don't do it regularly. Only about 25% of Americans meet the recommended activity levels and 20-40% of the population is completely sedentary. Now is the time to become active and improve your health and wellbeing.

For more on this topic:

Centers for Disease Control. <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/adults.html> Accessed 3/3/11.

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Pate RP, Yancey AK, Kraus WE. The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans: Implications for clinical and public health practice. *Am J Lifestyle Med*. 2010;4:209-217.

Reynolds, Gretchen. "Can exercise keep you young?" *The New York Times*. March 2, 2011.

Teychenne M, Ball K, Salmon J. Physical activity and the likelihood of depression in adults: A review. *Preventive Medicine*. 2008; 46: 397-411.

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Tips for Active Living

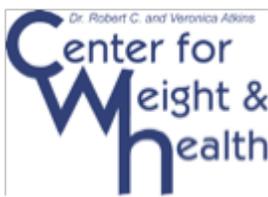
OUR FINAL ISSUE

This issue is our last WIC Worksite Wellness newsletter. While we will no longer send out newsletters, we will continue to work with CWA to provide wellness resources. Please keep in touch and share your agency's successes and/or questions by contacting us at:

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- 1. Incorporate physical activity into your usual life.** Being physically active doesn't have to mean radical changes to your lifestyle. Schedule stretch breaks at work. If you meet a friend for coffee, take it to go and walk around while you chat instead of sitting or incorporate games and other physical activities into family time.
- 2. Exercise with a buddy.** Exercising with a coworker or friend can make a workout session more fun and provides a mutual source of motivation. Make an exercise date with a friend or co-worker; you're less likely to abandon workout plans when someone is waiting for you.
- 3. Skip the elevator and take the stairs.** When presented with multiple options, choose the more active one. Taking the stairs is an easy way to fit in some routine exercise. Try walking or biking to work or the store instead of driving.
- 4. Mix it up.** Try a variety of activities. It will keep you from getting bored and you'll be more likely to work different parts of your body.



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