

Getting Active, Staying Active

A Call to Action

Few things in life are more important than good health. And few things are more essential to your health than physical activity. So move your health and well-being up a few notches by developing a more active mind-set. The benefits can enrich every area of your life - slimming down, gaining strength, relieving stress and having more energy. Most importantly, physical activity can help protect you against cancer and other chronic health problems like heart disease and Type II diabetes.

If you identify physical activity with sports and exercise, you're seeing only part of the picture. Physical activity also includes the daily activities of life and occupation that keep your body moving and expend energy. If you are not sitting, lying or standing still, you are probably involved in physical activity. The goal is getting enough activity on a regular basis to achieve health-enhancing rewards.

Believe it or not, you can reach this goal with activities as simple as a brisk walk around the block, as enjoyable as dancing or as productive as time spent working in the yard. There are benefits for everyone - young or old, nimble or not, even those who are self-proclaimed couch potatoes. We hope this brochure will provide the information and inspiration you need to get moving for lower cancer risk and a healthier, happier life!*

**Remember to check with your doctor before beginning a new program of exercise or when increasing the intensity of the exercise you already do.*

" Don't lie down when you can sit. Don't sit when you can stand. Don't stand when you can move." -Laurence E. Morehouse

Making the Choices That Matter

A 2003 Center for Disease Control report on the physical activity habits of Americans revealed that 25 percent of adults are not active at all during their leisure time.

How important is physical activity? Possibly much more important than you think. Scientists now know that 30 to 40 percent of all cancers could be prevented through some of the lifestyle choices we make every day: eating a sensible diet, keeping physically active and maintaining a healthy weight. Another 30 percent of cancer cases could be prevented by avoiding tobacco. These encouraging statistics come from the landmark research report, *Food, Nutrition and the Prevention of Cancer: a global perspective*, published in 1997 by the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR). The report was written by an expert panel of scientists who reviewed more than 4,500 research studies from around the world. It provides the most up-to-date, reliable advice to individuals on the best ways to prevent cancer through diet and lifestyle. Recommendations from the report can be summarized in the following simple action steps:

AICR Diet and Health Guidelines for Cancer Prevention

1. Choose a diet rich in a variety of plant-based foods.
 2. Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits.
 3. Maintain a healthy weight and be physically active.
 4. Drink alcohol only in moderation, if at all.
 5. Select foods low in fat and salt.
 6. Prepare and store food safely.
- And always remember...*
Do not use tobacco in any form.

"The wise, for cure, on exercise depend." - John Dryden

Who Needs to Keep Active?

The answer is simple - we all do. As the years go by, rather than becoming "too old" to exercise, staying active becomes even more important. The longer we continue to use our bodies, the longer they will stay healthy and in good working order.

Despite all the advantages, modern life makes it hard to give our bodies the attention they deserve. Many jobs are desk-bound and require us to sit for most of the day. Cars and unsafe streets mean we are not walking as much as we used to. And we spend hours of leisure time in front of the television or computer.

This means we need to rebuild activity into our daily lives. If you are currently inactive, you can improve your health and well-being by becoming even moderately active on a regular basis - walking, bicycling, dancing or swimming. On busy days, you can reach the same level of activity by raking leaves, cleaning windows or washing and waxing your car. Exerting a little more effort with everyday tasks and seeking out some more adventurous leisure activities can bring significant health benefits.

"If you rest, you rust." - Helen Hayes

A Few Good Reasons to Get Moving

Physical activity means more than just fitness. It can reduce our risk of heart disease, adult-onset diabetes and high blood pressure. It helps us maintain strong bones and joints (protecting against osteoporosis) and guards against excess weight. It can increase energy levels, boost self-esteem, improve quality of sleep and reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. Regular activity also has an important role in cancer prevention. AICR recommends:

*If occupational activity is low or moderate, take an hour's brisk walk or similar exercise daily, and also exercise vigorously for a total of at least one hour in a week.**

Strong scientific evidence shows that regular physical activity protects against colon cancer and possibly breast and lung cancers, according to the AICR expert report, *Food, Nutrition and the Prevention of Cancer*. Through its link to weight control, physical activity may also help fight obesity-related cancers, such as those of the endometrium (lining of the uterus), kidney, breast (in post-menopausal women), colon, pancreas and prostate.

**The AICR recommendation is a goal to work toward for lower cancer risk. If you are not currently active, this is not something to attempt all at once. Seek further information on gradually building up to a healthy level of activity.*

How does regular physical activity reduce cancer risk? "Protection may result from several different things," says John D. Potter, M.D., Ph.D., of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, Washington, and chair of the expert scientific panel that put together the AICR report. "In the case of colon cancer, one theory is that exercise helps food move more quickly through the bowel, which reduces the time cancer-causing food components are in the body," he notes.

"Physical activity also produces alterations in the way our bodies respond to hormones," says Dr. Potter. Regular exercise can improve the body's ability to use the hormone insulin, reducing the "insulin resistance" that has been shown to increase cancer risk. Estrogen is another hormone influenced by physical activity, and lower levels of estrogen production in women are linked to lower incidence of breast cancer.

In addition, active people tend to eat more food, which may include more vegetables, fruits and grains. They would benefit from the extra vitamins, minerals, fiber, phytochemicals and other substances in these foods known to protect against cancer.

People who are active over a long period of time tend to be at lowest risk for cancer, according to Marty Slattery, Ph.D., Professor of Epidemiology at the University of Utah. "But it's never too late to start," she says. The cancer protection afforded by physical activity appears to benefit older people as well as the young, so activity is an important way to reduce cancer risk no matter what your age. "Children and adults alike need to turn off the television or computer and get moving," advises Dr. Slattery. "The more you can do, the better."

"Walking is man's best medicine." - Hippocrates

How Active Are You Now?

You may be busy, but are you active? The best way to find out if you need to increase your activity levels is to determine how active you are now.

Take This Quick Quiz...

1. How much time do you spend walking briskly enough to make you warm and slightly out of breath?

Minutes in an average day: _____

Number of days in a week: _____

2. How much time do you spend doing any other activity that makes you feel warm and slightly out of breath? It could be gardening, housework, cycling to the store, or more specific exercise such as gentle swimming.

Minutes in an average day: _____

Number of days in a week: _____

3. Add up the amount of time you spend doing any vigorous exercise that gets you breathing more heavily, such as tennis, relatively energetic cycling or swimming, aerobics, jogging, playing a sport or vacuuming the stairs.

Minutes in an average week: _____

Add up the number of minutes you have entered for questions 1 and 2. If the answer adds up to less than an hour every day, and you have less than an hour in total for question 3, your health would benefit from more activity. Whatever you do already is a great start. Read on for some inspirational ideas to increase your activity levels.

If you do an hour's moderate activity in total, every day, plus an hour a week of more vigorous exercise - well done! You're making good use of your body and certainly reaping real health benefits. Look for ideas in this brochure to help keep up the good work.

"Be not afraid of going slowly, be afraid only of standing still." - Chinese Proverb

Getting Started

The bottom line on physical activity to lower cancer risk is that some activity is better than none and more is better than some. If you have time to watch television each day, then you can find the time for some moderate physical activity.

Success comes with starting slowly. First, be sure to check with your doctor before beginning any new exercise. Then, get moving at a rate that's invigorating but not painful or strained. If you begin with a brisk 10-minute walk (or other activity), you're on your way to establishing well-being and developing fitness. Gradually work up to longer walks and other types of exercise.

Recognizing the benefits of physical activity, choosing activities you enjoy and exercising at a pace you find comfortable - these are the keys to becoming and staying physically active. So get moving!

Exercise would be good, if only I wasn't...

Too old. It is not age that determines physical fitness, it is desire. Whether you are 20, 50 or 90 years old, you can improve your activity levels and enjoy better mobility as well as independence. It's a decisive case of "use it and improve it!"

Too busy. Try for several 10-minute "bursts" of activity throughout the day. In fact, three 10-minute sessions can provide almost all the health benefits of exercising in one 30-minute block of time.

Too tired. Next time you feel tired, go for a walk or ride a bike. Providing you aren't sick, it will leave you feeling energized - and may improve your long-term resistance to colds and illness.

Too unfit. We all have to start somewhere. No matter how unfit you think you are, you can always improve. Just be sure to choose activities you enjoy and set a pace that is comfortable for you.

It All Adds Up!

AICR recommends an hour a day of moderate activity and an hour a week of vigorous activity. Seem like a lot? Don't be intimidated - break the time down into workable segments, like we've done in this example. Before you know it, you will have met your daily goal.

- Take the dog for a brisk walk in the morning. = **15 minutes**
- Park the car at the edge of the lot and walk to the store. = **5 minutes**
- Take the stairs at work instead of riding the elevator. = **10 minutes**
- Do some gardening or play softball with the kids after school. = **30 minutes ...**
For a total of **60 minutes**

For vigorous activity, you can meet your hour-a-week goal in short spurts as well. Play tennis on the weekend with a friend, for example, or try some brisk hill walking.

"Do what you can, with what you have, with where you are." - Theodore Roosevelt

A Quick Guide to Being Active

Keeping physically active every day can be a challenge. If you know you're not as active as you could be, try using this section for some fresh ideas. Pick activities that suit your weekly routine, your interests and your fitness level. Above all, have some fun!

When beginning a more active lifestyle, you will feel pleasantly tired for the first two weeks, but this will pass and very soon you will notice how much better you feel.

Remember that all activity is good for you, and some is better than none. Gradually work your way up to an hour of moderate activity a day, plus an hour of vigorous activity once a week - part of AICR's recommendations for cancer prevention.

Around town...

Find ways to build more activity into your daily life.

- Start the day off with a quick walk or bike ride in the neighborhood. If the weather is bad or if you prefer to exercise at home, pop in a fitness video or hop on the exercise bike as you watch the morning news.
- Do the weekly grocery shopping. With a little extra effort, it's an ideal opportunity to boost your activity levels.

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Survivorship Clinic

- Make a point of using the stairs rather than elevators and escalators.
- When running errands, walk or ride your bicycle instead of taking the car or bus. Or get off the bus one stop early and walk the rest of the way.

When cleaning...

Weekend, weekday, whatever time of year - a little "spring cleaning" can help you squeeze in some healthy activity.

- Clear the clutter from closets and cupboards. If you are feeling especially energetic, straighten out the shed, garage or attic.
- Organize your "stuff" in boxes and throw away any trash. Bag up things you don't need and give them to charity.
- Do some housework - vacuum, scrub or dust. Rearrange the furniture or put up some shelves. Make an effort to do those jobs that have been nagging you for some time.

In the yard...

Keeping a good-looking yard or garden takes some work, but it can also help keep you on the road to fitness.

- Rake up the leaves or use a push mower to trim the lawn.
- Do some weeding, planting or digging in the garden.
- If you don't have your own yard to work in, offer to help a relative or neighbor instead.

In the water...

Pools are a great place for exercise, whether you swim laps or join an aqua exercise class.

- Many pools are well-equipped to deal with beginners, as well as mothers with babies and toddlers, pregnant women and older adults. Stop by your local pool or recreation center to see what classes they offer.
- Most swimming pools open early in the morning and close late in the evening - ideal for those who work during the day.
- If you are a swimmer, aim to complete a set number of lengths before you leave the pool. Increase the number slightly each week and vary your strokes for maximum enjoyment and a sense of achievement.

With sports...

Is there a sport that you have always wanted to try? Now could be the perfect time.

- Check the phone book or the Internet for local sports clubs or call your local community or recreation center.
- Arrange a weekly game of your favorite sport with friends or co-workers.
- Try to fit in a game of tennis, basketball, squash, etc. at lunchtime, right after work or on the weekend.

With family and friends...

Have some fun with the people you care about most. Weekends are a good time to catch up with friends and family.

- Walk or cycle to a picnic spot in the park or countryside. Make sure you wear sunscreen and bring along healthy snacks and drinks.
- Visit your local Chamber of Commerce or public library for maps and suggestions for a healthy day out.
- Simply fly a kite, throw a Frisbee, play softball or find some ducks to feed.

Choose Activities You Enjoy

Enjoyment is essential to an active lifestyle! When you consider ways to increase your activity levels, think first about what you like to do. Is there a sport or active hobby you used to enjoy but have given up, like dancing? Or are there any activities you have heard of and would like to try, such as pilates or yoga? If you like what you are doing, you are more likely to stick with it.

Another good idea is to choose an activity that you can easily build into your lifestyle. Our days tend to be so busy that anything inconvenient quickly falls by the wayside, no matter how enthusiastic we are to begin with. Look for activities you can fit into your current routine. It may help to divide things into two main areas: activity you do in daily life and more formal exercise.

Physical Activity in Daily Life

Surprisingly enough, most moderate activity takes place in and around the home. Start by doing daily activities more energetically. Housework, yardwork and even shopping can be good exercise if we put in some extra effort. Look for other activities that benefit your health as well as your home!

Getting from point A to point B also gives us a great chance to fit in some extra activity. Most people can comfortably walk one mile in 20 minutes. As you are running errands, there might be some places you could walk instead of driving the car or taking the bus. Choose places that are safe and convenient to get to, with good sidewalks and crossing areas.

For those in desk jobs, it is really important to take a lunch break. Not only can it make you more productive in the afternoon, it's a convenient time to fit in some physical activity - a walk, a run or some swimming. If you eat at your desk, find another reason to go out - do some shopping or mail a letter. You will probably feel more energetic when you return to work.

Bicycles are quick and efficient modes of transport. Most people can manage about four miles in 30 minutes, or 25 minutes with a little extra effort. Add a basket or wear a backpack, and the bike can be used for shopping trips too.

Other chances for activity often appear as soon as we start looking for them. It can be liberating to scoff at the elevator and use the stairs instead!

Structured Exercise

Cycling, dancing, swimming, aerobics... activities like these can provide variety, challenge and enjoyment. Try not to worry if you haven't done any formal exercise before - no one expects you to be fit before you've started.

Community recreation centers provide plenty of choices, and many of today's health clubs are not the muscle-bound places of old. All are quite welcoming to new members. If you are still unsure, go to your nearest club or center and look around. Tours are free and you may find special discounts for new members, as well as for certain age and income brackets.

Once again, always check with your doctor before beginning to exercise or trying any new type of activity.

Why not think about trying one or more of the following...

Exercise classes: Beginners' low-impact aerobics may be suitable, as well as those that combine aerobics with strength training. Stretch, yoga and tai chi classes relax the mind while gently working the body.

Dancing: Ballroom, ballet, country line, swing, salsa, modern, tap... dance classes are springing up everywhere. Take one for beginners, or a more advanced class to brush up on your technique.

Water activities: Swimming puts minimal stress on the joints and is great for flexibility. It can be moderate, such as the gentle breast stroke, or more intense if you mix in fast lengths with slow. If you don't swim, try an aqua aerobics class. We weigh much less in water than we do on land. That means excellent exercise without placing too much strain on the body.

Sports: Arrange to play tennis, golf (without the cart), basketball, badminton, bowling, soccer, racquetball, hockey or touch football. There are leagues for young and old alike. The social aspect of sports can be as rewarding and motivating as the fitness itself. And regular competition gives extra incentive to stay active, inspiring many of us to work harder than we would normally do on our own.

Strength training: Strength training exercises help you build muscle and burn fat, while gaining strength, balance and confidence. Not just for the young, strength training can make a 90-year-old stronger than a 50-year-old. Contact your local recreation center, YMCA or senior center to get the supervision you need to start.

Home exercise: Getting fit in the comfort of your own home is a convenient alternative. You can create a well-rounded exercise routine quite inexpensively with the help of fitness videos and simple equipment such as hand weights. A stationary bike, treadmill or stair climbing machine can get you moving - even while you watch television.

Tips For An Active Life

- 1. Take it easy.** Always warm up before exercise with a few minutes of walking or a less strenuous version of the activity you are about to undertake. Slow yourself down gradually at the end of exercise and stretch then, while your muscles are still warm and limber.
- 2. Steady progress** is the key to success, so take care when you go faster or farther than you've done before. Uncomfortable stiffness and pain are signs that you are overdoing it. If you feel any pain during exercise, stop right away and be sure to consult your doctor.
- 3. Be Safe.** If you are exercising alone, know your surroundings and keep to areas where there will be lots of people around. Tell a friend you are out and when you expect to be home. If you are exercising in the evening, wear bright colors or reflective tape to make sure you are seen by cars and others.

"Life is like a ten-speed bike. Most of us have gears we never use." - Charles M. Schultz

The Importance of a Healthy Diet

To get the best out of your body, you need to give it nutritious foods. The mostly plant-based diet AICR recommends for cancer prevention is also perfect for an active lifestyle.

What is a mostly plant-based diet made of? Consider your plate at meals: at least two-thirds or more should be filled with vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans, and one-third or less with meat or dairy products.

Vegetables and fruits - lightly cooked or raw, also canned or frozen - provide vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals and other substances essential for cancer prevention and all-around good health. Whole grain breads and cereals are excellent choices, as are brown rice, bulgur, barley and potatoes cooked in their skins. Beans are low in fat and high in fiber and protein.

Active people require extra water as well. Try to drink about eight glasses every day - especially before, during and after exercise. Alcohol and caffeinated versions of coffee, soda and tea do not count toward this goal. Sports drinks are probably not necessary if you are exercising less than 60-90 minutes at a time.

Active for a Healthy Body Weight

A combination of regular exercise and a mostly plant-based diet is the key to maintaining a healthy body weight. While being active is the quickest way to burn calories, a fit body uses more calories even when sitting still - our bodies need more energy to maintain muscle than fat.

As you increase your fitness level, use your clothes and the mirror to measure physical improvements more often than the bathroom scales. Body weight is a useful guide, but, since muscle weighs more than fat, you will probably get more meaningful feedback from your belt notches!

"You can't turn back the clock, but you can wind it up again." - Bonnie Prudden

Positive Thinking

Becoming more active doesn't just challenge our bodies - the mind has work to do as well. Sometimes our own doubts or high expectations can keep us from being our best.

Respect Your Advances

While the first step is sometimes the hardest, it is also the most important. If we are not used to exercise, we have to develop confidence and learn to see ourselves as active people. Make things easier by breaking your physical activity goals into small, manageable pieces.

If you are just starting out, things will probably be a bit awkward at first. This is okay and very normal. Stick with it. Every week you will get a little bit better. Before long, you will look back to where you started and hardly be able to believe the progress you have made.

1. Taking the first step: Pull out your calendar or diary and mark which day this week that you will start being more active. Outline what you plan to do during the first week - maybe just working some extra walking into your existing schedule. Above all, be realistic.

2. Gradual progress: While you build up the moderate activity that naturally takes place during the week, think about ways of working more energetic exercise into your routine. After a few weeks, you may feel ready to test some more formal exercise ideas like swimming, dancing, tennis or brisk walking.

3. Moving on: Once you have become accustomed to a more active life and have found a form of energetic exercise that suits you, you are ready to focus on your ideal, but realistic, weekly goal. Don't be discouraged if you don't reach it immediately - it can take up to six months to get comfortable with a new routine. Congratulate yourself for every advance you make and enjoy seeing yourself as able and active.

Staying Motivated

Even the most enthusiastic start to exercise can fizzle out after a few weeks. Motivation is the one thing that will keep you going through busy days, bad weather and tired spells. That's why it's important to form a positive attitude toward physical activity: it's not something you really *ought* to get around to, it's something you *deserve* that will enrich your life for years to come.

- Try exercising with a friend or family member. You will have someone to share your experiences with and you are less likely to skip a session if it means letting someone else down.
- If you get bored easily, change activities frequently to keep your mind alert and your body challenged.
- Realize improvements don't happen overnight. Keep a fitness diary to chart your progress and see how far you have come.
- From time to time, push yourself by trying to go a bit further or a bit faster. Personal challenges keep you entertained as well as continually improving fitness.
- Enter an event. A goal - such as a walk or run for charity, a swim-a-thon or a cycling event - provides marvelous incentive to keep moving. Start with a comfortable, attainable distance and give yourself adequate time to prepare.
- If you are exercising to lose weight, have patience and enjoy the other benefits that come first. It won't be long before you feel more energy, more strength and less stress. A change in weight will take more time, but - when combined with a healthy eating plan - it will happen.
- Keep in mind that exercise gets easier as your body adapts. Before long, you'll find that physical activity becomes a way of life - something you are eager to get back to if you have to take a break, something that is one of the most enjoyable and comfortable parts of your day!

"Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you cannot be successful or happy." -Norman Vincent Peale

Works Cited

The American Institute for Cancer Research