

Exercise for Health

“The sovereign invigorator of the body is exercise, and of all the exercise, walking is the best.”

—Thomas Jefferson

Consider the fact that Americans are heavier than at any other time in history with over 61% now overweight. In order for true health to be obtained and maintained a balance between rest and activity must be established. God created us to work. “And the Lord God took the man [Adam], and put him into the Garden of Eden to work it and watch it.” Genesis 2:15. Life is motion and motion is life.

In many cultures physical activity is still required in order to obtain food, clothing shelter and travel. In modern times, it seems many pride themselves on just how little physical activity they can get away with. Just look at the health of most Americans: According to the US Statistical Abstract only 1.5 percent of the US population would qualify as healthy. It is only recently that many are rediscovering that physical exercise is absolutely necessary for health.

REGAINING AND MAINTAINING HEALTH REQUIRES EFFORT!

The idea of working out sounds too much like “work” to most people. Since they work all day, why do more? It shouldn't surprise anyone to learn that most of my patients consider an occupation that involves standing and walking is the same as exercise. Exercise is a controlled activity designed to build strength, increase endurance and stamina and increase cardiovascular function, thus making the body stronger and more efficiently. Activity that is vigorous enough to cause one to sweat is needed for cardiovascular benefits. Walking may be enough for endurance improvement in some.

Many are willing and ready to begin an exercise program but they lack the motivation to begin. There just isn't time. If you don't make time for health improvement now, plan to make time for disease and illness later. Once you get started and have stuck with a program for awhile, it will get to a point where missing the exercise becomes more painful than making the time to exercise.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF EXERCISE?

1. **Endurance building** is a gradual, systemic increase in time spent in mild to moderate activity to build lung capacity and heart efficiency. The activity is usually performed 20 to 60 minutes and may be bicycling, jogging, walking, swimming (only if in a non-chlorine source), or resistive rebounding. Keep a pace that will maintain the heart rate at 50 to 80% of its capacity or maximum heart rate. A newcomer should begin at 50% of their maximum heart rate and a veteran athlete may go as high as 85%.

To calculate your maximum heart rate use the following formula:

$(220 - \text{your age} - \text{your resting heart rate}) \times (\text{desired percent}) + \text{resting heart rate}$

A 40-year-old male in relatively good health who is just beginning might start at 60%. Let's say for example that his resting heart rate is 62 beats per minute:

$$(220 - 40 - 62) \times 60\% + 62 = 131.8$$

This individual would maintain his exercising heart rate at approximately 132 beats per minute for a minimum of 20 minutes. Another method for the mathematically challenged is to use the "talk through" test. If you cannot talk without effort while exercising, you are working out too hard. If you can sing without effort you are exercising too easy. Try to maintain yourself somewhere in between.

2. **Strength building** is another type of exercise. It is designed to build muscle mass and increase physical strength. It is important to exercise antagonists or opposite muscle groups to maintain balance. Muscle strength is gradually increased by increasing the weight or resistance systematically. Common methods include concentric, eccentric, isometric, isokinetic and good old hard labor.
3. **Stretching** involves increasing flexibility and range of motion. When muscles become too tight from lack of exercise or activity it is important to warm them up properly by gently stretching prior to exercising. Whether stretching neck, back, shoulders or legs it is important to begin gradually and increase the stretch without bouncing or excessive force. Both strength building and stretching are important in the management of musculoskeletal conditions. See a specialist such as myself for specific exercises.

GETTING STARTED.

You've got the new shoes and a fancy new exercise outfit; you're ready to go, right? No! If you have health concerns, are over 30 - 35, overweight, or have a history of heart problems discuss these along with your health goals with a qualified healthcare provider. Once you are ready to begin, **START SLOWLY!**

By starting slowly your chances of an injury are less and the chances that you will stick with your program are far greater. If you experience chest pains or pressure, heart irregularities, shortness of breath, dizziness, pain in your jaw or shoulder region discontinue your program and see your physician immediately.

Start your workout with five to ten minutes of gentle stretching and warming up. If you are going with endurance training start with just a couple of minutes and build it up to 20 to 30 minutes. For some walking briskly 30 minutes four times a week is generally enough to reap benefits for your heart. A straightening program is best when discussed with a qualified individual.

Another beneficial exercise that I am fond of is resistive rebounding. What is resistive rebounding, you might be asking. In this era of high tech, high cost equipment the simple has been lost. Resistive rebounding is using a minitrampoline and small hand weights. It is extremely simple and equally convenient and affordable. Since rebounding involves alternating weightlessness and increasing gravitational pull, every cell, muscle, and organ is exercised. Rebounding is a phenomenal exercise and will build strength, increase endurance and improve health. Wheelchair bound individuals can also benefit just by placing their feet on the rebounder and bouncing them. If you have not yet found an exercise for you this very well may be the perfect one!