

EXERCISE, IT DOES A BODY GOOD

By now everyone has heard of the epidemic of obesity in our country. One of the ways to fight this epidemic is exercise. But who hasn't used the following excuses to avoid it?

- I can't think of a physical activity that I would enjoy.
- Sports equipment and health clubs are for fit people.
- Why should I bother to exercise? It won't help me.
- I don't have the time and energy to take care of myself and exercise.

Physical activity can be a part of everyone's life... regardless of your physical limitations! You don't have to be an athlete. The key is to keep your body moving! Start out by keeping it simple - do regular stretching exercises... housework... raised-bed gardening... play catch with kids... or swim. Keeping active means you will feel physically, emotionally and socially healthy! Here's how you can get started:

- Choose a physical activity that you can enjoy, and that you'll stick with. This booklet contains a wide range of possibilities.
- Be sure that the activity is sustained (15 to 20 minutes per session), and regular (at least three times per week).
- See your doctor before starting any physical activity program.
- Start slowly, and increase the amount or duration of activity gradually.
- Join with others (friends, family, co-workers) to get, and give support.
- Keep a record of your activity (distances, number of times per week, etc.) so you can measure your progress

Kids Need Physical Activity, too.

Many children of all abilities just don't get enough exercise. Yet, all kids need to be active. They need something that will help improve endurance, balance and coordination. Besides the physical and mental benefits, physical activity, especially team sports, can help kids learn social skills, to share and to take turns. So, if you have a child, encourage physical activity. And, join them. That way, everybody benefits.

When you first begin remember to talk to your doctor if you are not used to regular exercise and always use the correct safety equipment i.e. bicycle helmets.

Make It Even More Enjoyable

Is there a friend or family member you'd like to have join you? A "buddy" system works well for many activities. With a partner, you'll have companionship as well as shared encouragement and accomplishments.

Certain Activities Improve Certain Functions

Besides being enjoyable and healthful, physical activity improves many aspects of your health. Staying fit is especially important for people with disabilities, many of whom live sedentary lifestyles. When you're physically active, you're less likely to develop additional health problems, like heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis or arthritis; to gain excess weight; or become depressed. Physical activity can be good for your body:

It energizes, and increases stamina and strength.

It enhances mobility.

It may strengthen bones.

It helps control weight by burning extra calories.

It improves both appetite and digestion.

It tones and strengthens muscles.

It keeps joints, tendons and ligaments flexible for easy, unrestricted movement.

It improves heart and lung functions.

It strengthens the heart and improves circulation.

It improves blood pressure readings and glucose levels.

It helps balance and agility.

Physical activity is also good for the mind:

It improves self-image and self-confidence.

It stimulates self-reliance.

It relaxes, and relieves stress and tension.

It improves intellectual alertness and concentration skills.

It fosters an overall feeling of health and well-being.

It results in a sense of accomplishment, and new skills.

It increases your chances of meeting new people.