



Holistic Family Practice

Exercising: My Exercise Prescription for You

According to studies, by the year 2010, obesity and physical inactivity will surpass smoking as the #1 cause of preventable death in the U.S. But the silver lining in the dark cloud is this: *you have control over this*. You don't have to let this happen - all you have to do is exercise! Let me give you some more reasons why exercising is by far the best thing you can do for your health - it's better than medicines, it's better than eating healthy, and it's even better than losing weight. Yes, you heard me - it's even more important than actually losing weight.

Cancer and heart disease are the most common causes of death in our country, and your risk for either cause is most reduced by - you guessed it, exercise. Estimates reflect that healthy eating reduces cancer risk by 30% overall (70% for colon cancer), abstinence from smoking reduces cancer risk by 25-90% (a wide range of estimates, certainly; mostly in terms of lung cancer), while exercise reduces cancer risk by 25% (for colon cancer) to 70% (for breast cancer). So compared to other lifestyle factors, exercising is certainly comparable to other factors that top the list. Regarding heart disease, research shows that properly controlling diabetes, blood pressure, cholesterol, and even maintaining an ideal weight (body mass index) over a 3 years period leads to a 3-5% reduced risk of heart disease over the next 3 years. But regular exercise reduces that same risk by 50% - a 10-15 or more fold benefit!

So what does it mean to "exercise"? Research has provided us with guidelines for the type and amounts of exercise that is shown to provide the benefits I mentioned above. And the great news is this: it's much more practical than the average person might be led to think. So here are the recommendations:

http://www.acsm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home_Page&TEMPLATE=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=7764

Holistic Family Practice

65 Newburyport Turnpike, Newbury, MA 01951

Phone: 978-465-9770

DEA No. _____

Name _____

Date: _____

1) Moderate intensity aerobic/"cardio" exercise totaling 30 minutes a day, five days a week. This is the equivalent of a brisk walk, and doesn't have to be done for 30 minutes consecutively - it can be for as short as 10 minutes per session. This intensity of exercise can be characterized as "working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat, yet still being able to carry on a conversation." (Note that to actually lose weight or maintain weight loss, 60 to 90 minutes of physical activity may be necessary. This 30-minute recommendation is for the average healthy adult to maintain health and reduce the risk for chronic disease.) OR...

1a. Vigorous intensity aerobic/"cardio" exercise for 20 minutes a day, three days a week. This is the equivalent of jogging.

AND -

2) Strength exercises: 8-12 repetitions of a single set of 8-10 exercises 2-3 times per week, involving all major muscle groups and without breath holding. Although I freely encourage joining a gym, if that is time or financially prohibitive, such exercises can be done at home and should likely only take you 20 or so minutes per day! Some exercises included in this recommendation include push ups and sit ups. If you feel at a loss in creating an exercise routine, I would highly encourage visiting a personal trainer (feel free to ask me for recommendations), even if just for 3-5 visits, just to help set you on the right path. Alternatively, this website has some simple home exercise ideas for adults of all ages (it's geared more toward older adults, but is a starting point for anyone, certainly):

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/ExerciseGuide/chapter04a.htm>

Refills _____

Dr. _____

Why are these specific recommendations made? Because significant benefits are found at these levels of exercise, but the risk of injury begins to outweigh the additional benefits obtained when we exercise for longer periods of time or more frequent sessions per week.

Additionally, individuals who are 60 years of age and older should add in balance and flexibility exercises on a daily or near-daily basis. This should only take about 10 minutes per day, at 10-30 seconds per stretch or balance activity, for 3-4 repetitions per activity. The website below describes some examples of such balance exercises. Additionally, one could consider yoga or tai chi, two excellent ways of maintaining both balance and flexibility.

<http://seniorliving.about.com/od/basicexerciseries/ss/balanceexercise.htm>

So get to it! There's nothing you can do better for yourself, including losing weight, than to exercise. Don't hesitate to ask me for more information, or talk to a personal trainer. When it comes to our bodies, the saying holds true: use it or lose it.