

## BODY WEIGHT AND BODY COMPOSITION

# Exercise

Exercise is a necessary part of every healthy life style. The word has different meanings for everyone, of course, and your level of involvement will depend on your current fitness level, additional medical complications you may have, age and many other factors. The main thing to understand, however, is that exercise doesn't necessarily mean something intense like running a marathon or pumping iron to get huge muscles. Exercise simply refers to any movement of the large muscle groups (think legs, back and arms) that involves activities beyond your normal daily life. So, walking to the bus stop doesn't count as exercise, but walking to the doctor's office if you normally take the bus does. Even getting off the bus a few stops early and walking part of the way is considered exercise. There are many simple ways to increase your amount of activity, and the more active you become, the more likely your health is to improve.

Exercise has tons of great benefits, some of which include the following:

- improved appetite
- increased metabolism
- increased energy
- improved sleep habits
- improved appearance
- increased self-esteem
- improved mood
- improved immune function
- increased bone mass

There are three different types of exercise. Ideally, a healthy lifestyle should incorporate some form of all three of these for balanced health.

### **Flexibility:**

Includes all stretching exercises and should be performed before strength and aerobic exercises. Flexibility training can increase your balance and agility, and has been linked to increased immune

function because it stimulates lymphatic fluid (immune cells) to be more active. It may also help to reduce blood pressure and other heart disease risk factors.

A goal is at least 5-10 minutes before and after strength or aerobic exercise.

Examples include yoga, Pilates, and static (still) muscle stretches.

### **Aerobic or cardiovascular fitness:**

These exercises make your heart pump a little harder and get you a little bit out of breath. They increase the strength and capacity of your heart, lungs and blood vessels.

As recommended by the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, "to reduce the risk of chronic disease, it is recommended that adults engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week." The Guidelines also indicate "greater health benefits can be obtained by engaging in physical activity of more vigorous intensity or longer duration." Remember, you can always break up your exercise or activity program into 4 5-minute sessions, 2 10-minute sessions, or whatever works for you. Start from somewhere and don't be discouraged if your fitness level doesn't allow you to be this active right away. These are goals to work toward, not something you have to jump right into immediately.

Examples of aerobic exercise include walking, running, rollerblading, hiking, biking, swimming, basketball, dancing, etc.

### **Strength training:**

This form of exercise helps to increase the size and strength of the body's muscles. If you're a woman, fear not, you don't have enough testosterone to build big, bulky muscles. Increased muscle strength

## Exercise *continued*

increases your metabolism, helping to maintain weight and also improves your body's immune strength. This can help to prevent muscle wasting and help manage lipodystrophy.

Goals for strength training should be 2-3 sessions each week with about 8 different exercises focusing on the largest muscle groups (the legs, upper arms, back, chest and shoulders) each time. If you are starting out at a very low fitness level, you don't need to lift heavy weights, you can use exercise bands or soup cans, or even your body's own resistance.

Examples include traditional weight lifting, calisthenics such as push-ups and squats, or seated chair exercises using a resistance band.

These are the basic guidelines and recommendations for exercise. If you are just starting out, there are tons of great resources at your book store, library, or on the internet. If going to a fitness center, YMCA, or other gym is an option for you, you may consider working with a personal trainer for a few sessions to make sure you learn the proper form and avoid injury. Remember, start slow, don't push yourself too hard and try to find activities that you enjoy and will keep you coming back for more. Everyone should exercise, but different amounts or styles are right for different people.

### Things to remember:

- Consult with your doctor or primary care provider, especially if you have any other physical or medical problems, to make sure you have decided on activities that are appropriate for you.
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise. You should weigh yourself before and after exercise, and drink 2 cups of fluid, preferably water, for every pound lost to prevent dehydration.
- Rest at least 24 hours between strength training days to avoid overuse and injury.
- Consider consulting a fitness professional for basic guidelines and suggestions.
- Make fitness a priority—schedule it just as you would a doctor's appointment, it's equally important! Working out with a buddy may help to increase your enjoyment and dedication to your fitness program.
- Have fun!!!