

'Take a walk': Good health advice for a friend

Just look around, you can see there is renewed interest in walking for health and fitness. Listed below are the questions that are most often asked about walking, and my answers to them.

Q: What are the advantages of a conventional walking program over other forms of exercise?

A: Walking is associated with a low dropout rate, an easily tolerable exercise intensity, and fewer orthopedic and musculoskeletal problems of the knees, feet and ankles. Moreover, brisk walking programs can increase heart-lung fitness.

Oakland Family Services offers volunteer training

Registration is open for Volunteer Training at Oakland Family Services in September. The agency, with offices at several locations throughout the county, is dependent upon the caring and commitment of volunteers to keep a number of child abuse and neglect prevention and treatment programs running. Volunteers work with infants, children, teens and parents both at the agency and in the families' homes. Opportunities exist in a variety of

ness, improve the blood fat profile and reduce body weight and fat stores. Some of the best health advice you can give a friend is to "take a walk."

• It's been said that walking and running a mile burn the same number of calories — is this true?

A: No. Running a mile actually burns more calories than walking it (e.g., 85 versus 140 calories for a 154 pound man). Nevertheless, the more you weigh the greater the number of calories that you burn per mile.

• Is brisk walking an intense

programs, working one-on-one or in groups. Parent aides, perinatal coaches, employability mentors, birth companions, tutors (for children and adults), children's group leaders and adult group co-leaders are all needed. Day and evening training is offered, and volunteers will work closely with other volunteers and staff. Call 858-7766 for further information, or to enroll in the September training programs.

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fitness
Barry Franklin

enough activity to improve heart-lung fitness?

A: The answer is a resounding "yes!" Recent studies suggest that most middle-aged Americans can attain the minimum exercise intensity for training, that is, 70 percent of maximal heart rate, simply by brisk walking alone.

• How can one vary their walking program to make it more enjoyable and/or effective?

A: Walking with a backpack, in water, on a treadmill incline, or with handweights are all viable options. A new device, called Exersiters, actually allows one to simulate cross-country skiing while walking.

• Does walking with handweights substantially increase the energy expenditure and calorie cost of walking?

A: Yes — provided that one swings the arms vigorously while

walking, rather than just holding the weights at the sides. This form of walking can actually equal the calorie cost of jogging.

• Can walking alone promote "total" body fitness?

A: No. Numerous studies have shown that the physiologic benefits of exercise training are largely "specific" to the muscle groups involved in the training program. Walking should be complemented with upper body training devices, such as rowing machines, weights, and wall pulleys.

• How much walking per week is needed to promote optimal cardiovascular health?

A: Recent studies suggest that simply walking briskly for 30 or more minutes, four to six days per week, is enough. Even small increases in fitness can have a significant impact on reducing the death rate from heart disease.

• How about walking as a conditioner after a heart attack?

A: Walking is the "activity of choice" after an acute coronary event. The speed limitations of walking prevent it from becoming too vigorous.

• How does the physiologic profile of competitive race walkers compare with other elite athletic groups?

A: Several years ago we studied nine national class race walkers. Most of these athletes were in their mid-twenties to early thirties. Their average walk training distance was 74 miles per week. Measured heart-lung fitness was slightly below that of world class marathon runners. Their average body fatness was very low, 7.8 percent, and mean total cholesterol was only 169.

• Is walking an adequate exercise to slow the progression of osteoporosis in older women?

A: Research suggests that walking and other weight-bearing exercise seems to play a favorable role in increasing bone mass.

• Can a regular walking program "reverse" some of the deleterious effects that are normally attributed to aging?

A: Yes. After the age of 30, heart-lung fitness typically declines by approximately one percent per year. Since an exercise program can lead to a 20 percent increase in the maximal oxygen consumption, this transforms to a 20 percent functional rejuvenation!

Barry Franklin, Ph.D. is director, Cardiac Rehabilitation and Exercise Laboratories, William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, and associate professor of physiology, Wayne State University, School of Medicine.

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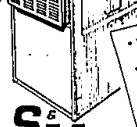
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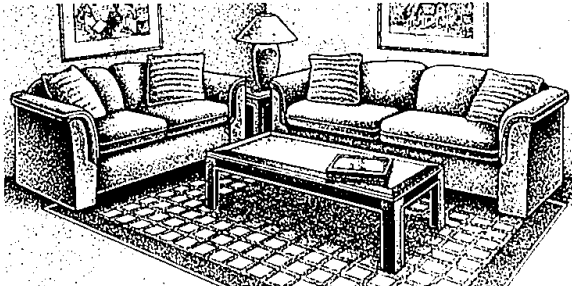
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