

Stimulator

Make time for exercise

Regular exercise is the key to a happier, healthier life, but all too often, exercise and excuses go hand in hand.

It's been said over and over again how important exercise is to one's physical and mental well-being, but when it comes down to doing something to change their lifestyles, many people's excuses become greater than their determination.

Whether you're a once-a-month exerciser or a complete couch potato, the list of benefits to be gained from exercise may be longer than you think.

Besides burning calories, regular exercise can stimulate the mind as well as the body's energy level.

The National Cholesterol Education Program maintains that exercising for 15 to 30 minutes three times a week will give you more energy, relieve stress, give added strength to work, allow you to play harder and longer, firm muscles, and allow you to fall asleep easier.

Chances of developing high-risk health problems, like heart disease and obesity, are lessened by exercise.

Shaping up and staying fit helps people tackle problems such as high

blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes and obesity. The higher your blood cholesterol level, the greater your chances of getting heart disease.

Once you start an exercise program, it's easier to sustain than you may think. And once you start seeing and feeling the results, you won't want to stop.

Remember, incorporating an exercise program into your daily routine involves time management, planning and flexibility on your part.

Here are some tips for getting an exercise binge:

■ Sign up for an exercise class or join a health club.

■ Jogging is a great aerobic workout and you don't need a healthy club to incorporate this activity into your daily routine.

■ Walking for fitness can be incorporated into busy days or your lunch hour.

■ Replenish your body with plenty of liquids always, especially during exercise. Drinking lots of water will not only cleanse your body of toxins, but will retain the moisture balance in your skin.

Walk your way to fitness

Walking — the most natural of all exercises — is an excellent aerobic activity and one we're likely to continue on a regular basis, says Ed Pienkosz, exercise psychologist at Total Rehabilitation and Athletic Conditioning Center (TRACC), Novi, a community service facility of Botsford General Hospital, Farmington Hills.

Besides providing cardiovascular benefits, walking is inexpensive and it can be done almost anywhere — around your neighborhood, on an inside track or in a shopping mall with other walkers.

"All you need in the way of equipment are the proper shoes. Walking uses large muscle groups, it isn't hard on the joints and, when you walk at the right pace long enough, you can increase your heart rate to its target zone," Pienkosz said.

The key is finding an atmosphere you'll be comfortable walking in and walk regularly, he added.

Health experts say a 20-minute walk

three to four times a week is a workout that most people are likely to continue because it's convenient and inexpensive.

For added benefit, try walking with hand weights of two pounds or less in each hand. But don't swing the weights and never use ankle weights, which could injure the joints, Pienkosz said.

Done regularly, a simple exercise like walking makes other activities in your daily routine easier and more comfortable. Walking will help reduce the risk of muscular skeletal disease and train your body to deal with stress, health experts say.

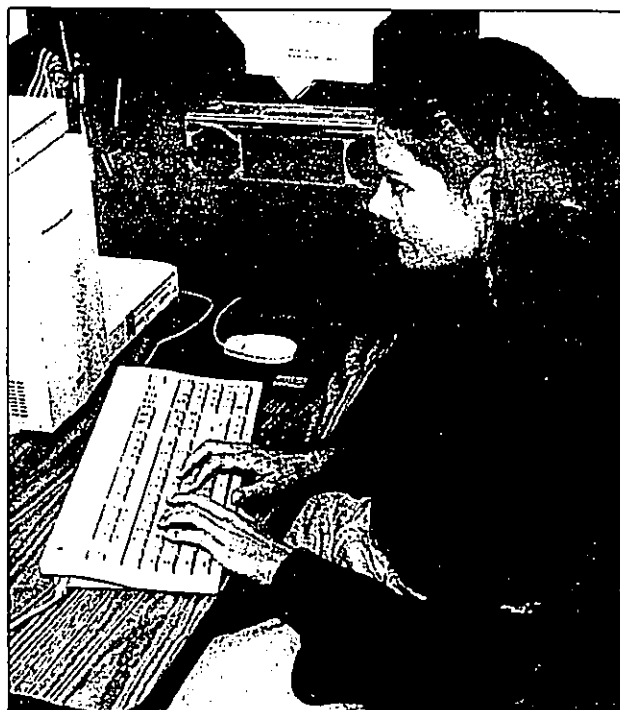
Pienkosz explains: "Your body can't distinguish between the stress of exercise and a stressful argument. You can't control the level of action in an argument. But you can control the stress of exercise by getting your body accustomed to regular stress with regulation (reaching target heart rate). Eventually, in an argument or other situation, your heart rate and blood pressure will maintain safer levels."

Allergy control begins at home

According to the National Institute of Health, the most troublesome of indoor allergens is the dust mite and its waste particles. These microscopic insect-like creatures live in mattresses, pillows, bedding, carpets and upholstered furniture and thrive in warm, humid conditions.

To help fight these allergens, experts recommend covering mattresses and pillows with dustproof casings. Many

allergy sufferers have been reluctant to use dust covers made of vinyl because they are uncomfortable. They tend to retain heat and fail to absorb the normal perspiration that occurs during sleep. An alternative: Allergy Control Covers. They have a dustproof barrier on the inside that traps offending allergens. Call Allergy Control Products in Ridgefield, Conn. — 1-800-422-DUST. —News USA



Handiwork: Be diligent when at the keyboard to ward off injuries to the wrist or hand.

Helping hand

Therapists can help fight repetitive motion injuries

With increased use of key-boards in various occupations, more and more people are experiencing cumulative trauma disorder of the wrist and hand, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

This type of injury can result from repetitive tasks with low force, such as the use of a computer keyboard, or repetitive tasks involving force, such as using a screwdriver.

Symptoms of this type of injury might include pain, numbness or tingling, decreased strength and a loss of range of motion in the wrist and hand, experts say.

A physical therapist's background in movement of the body (kinesiology) and body mechanics and anatomy enables him or her to provide this consultation to the industry and to work with individuals to help them understand what might be contributing to their symptoms.

Physical therapists can also provide treatment to help decrease the symptoms and help prevent recurrence.

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Physical therapist Dawn Widmer, of the Private Practice Section, American Physical Therapy Association, suggests the following to avoid injury:

■ Keep the wrist in a neutral position. Adjust your activity so the wrist is not maintained in a bent downward or upward position.

■ Avoid repetition. If you must perform repetitive tasks, vary your hand position.

■ Rest. If possible, take rest breaks. If not, switch between hard and easy tasks or change hands.

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