Working toward a healthier weight a smart lifestyle decision: a NetWellness column

By Plain Dealer guest columnist
January 13, 2010, 4:45PM

Working toward a healthier weight is one of the most important lifestyle decisions you can make for improving your overall personal health and well-being. In addition to the benefits of more energy and strength, keeping your weight at a healthy level can lower your risk of developing diseases such as high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, and some forms of cancer. Even losing a few pounds can have health benefits.

Getting started

Getting started on a new physical activity program can be an overwhelming task. Be sure to consult with your physician prior to beginning a vigorous exercise program and follow any restrictions he/she recommends. Because you are moving from being less physically active to becoming more active, it is important that you start gradually with exercises that you enjoy and are not too tiring.

Keep in mind the following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention physical activity guidelines for healthy adults:

- Either 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic...
activity (i.e., brisk walking) every week and muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms)

- Or, 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., jogging or running) every week and muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms)

- Or, an equivalent mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity and muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms).

**Step it up**

For even greater health benefits, the CDC recommends 300 minutes each week (about 40 minutes each day) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 150 minutes (about 20 minutes each day) of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity or an equivalent mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, in addition to the muscle-strengthening activities listed above.

**What does "aerobic activity" or "cardio" mean**

So, what kinds of activities count? Aerobic activity, or cardio, is any activity that gets you breathing harder and your heart beating faster - as long as you're moving at a moderate or vigorous intensity for at least 10 minutes at a time.

Examples include walking, running, and swimming, and bicycling.

- **Moderate-intensity** aerobic activity means you're working hard enough to raise your heart rate and break a sweat. One way to tell is that you'll be able to talk, but not sing the words to your favorite song. Walking fast, pushing a lawn mower, water aerobics are activities that require moderate effort.

- **Vigorous-intensity** aerobic activity means you're breathing hard and fast, and your heart rate has gone up quite a bit. If you're working at this level, you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. Jogging, running, fast cycling all require vigorous effort.

A rule of thumb is that one minute of vigorous-intensity activity is about the same as two minutes of moderate-intensity activity.

**What are muscle-strengthening activities**

There are many ways you can do muscle-strengthening activities, whether at home or at the gym.
You could try lifting weights, working with resistance bands, doing exercises that use your body weight for resistance (i.e., push ups, sit ups), heavy gardening (i.e., digging, shoveling), or yoga.

**Ease into your exercise routine**

Be sure you build up over time, that is, gradually increase the amount of time and intensity of your exercise. When beginning an exercise program, 5-10 minutes of activity may be all you can do.

If you want to do more vigorous-level activities, slowly replace those that take moderate effort like brisk walking, with more vigorous activities like jogging. Be sure to start and end each session with stretching.

I recommend you chart your progress by recording the type of exercise you performed and the duration in a notebook. Don’t get discouraged if you don’t see results right away. Keep your focus on the process and celebrate the small steps along the way.

**Reference**

- CDC Physical Activity Guidelines

**Magic Slim-Sale $14.99/bx**
Magic Slim - Better than 2 Day Diet
www.KaylysBeauty.com

**Muscle Building Secrets**
Our 2009 Muscle Builder of the Year. Claim a Free Trial Bottle Today.
www.nitricoxidemiracle.com

**Obama Urges Refinance**
$180,000 Refinance $939/mo. See Rates- No Credit Check Req.
www.LowerMyBills.com

**Recommend (0)**