

Exercise for Life



Introduction

The benefits of regular exercise cannot be overstated. Studies have shown that people who exercise regularly live longer, are healthier, and enjoy a better quality of life than those who do not exercise. It is now generally accepted knowledge that even moderate physical activity performed regularly improves the health and well-being of all individuals.

Despite this knowledge, studies show that more than 60% of American adults are not regularly active and that an astonishing 25% of adults are not active at all. Therefore, the government recommends that schools and communities provide education to promote exercise to people of all ages.

This report has been prepared for Michigan Avenue Athletic Club in order to help spread the word on the importance of physical activity for the health of our members. It is meant as an introduction only. For more information about the health benefits of exercise, or about a particular type of exercise program, please contact any member of our staff. He or she will be happy to help you find the information you need.

The Impact on Your Health

It is believed that lack of physical activity and poor diet taken together are the second largest underlying cause of death in the United States. Studies show that even the most inactive people can gain significant health benefits if they accumulate 30 minutes or more of physical activity per day. Some of the known benefits of exercise include disease prevention and control, weight control, and improved mental health.

Exercise can also have an impact on your lifestyle as well. Getting out and exercising may improve your social life by giving you an opportunity to meet new people. It may open up opportunities for your career as well. For example, it is commonly believed that a lot of business is conducted on

the golf course or tennis court!

Disease Control

Daily physical activity can help prevent heart disease and stroke by strengthening the heart muscle, lowering blood pressure, raising the levels of good cholesterol and lowering bad cholesterol, improving blood flow, and increasing the heart's working capacity.

By reducing body fat, physical activity helps prevent obesity and may help to prevent and control noninsulin-dependent diabetes.

By increasing muscle strength and endurance and improving flexibility and posture, regular exercise helps to prevent back pain. Regular weight-bearing exercise promotes bone formation and may prevent many forms of bone loss associated with aging.

Mental Health

Studies on the psychological effects of exercise have found that regular physical activity can improve your mood and the way you feel about yourself. Researchers also have found that exercise is likely to reduce depression and anxiety and help you to better manage stress.

Weight Control

Research shows that regular physical activity, combined with healthy eating habits, is the most efficient and healthful way to control your weight. Regular physical activity uses excess calories that otherwise would be stored as fat. It also builds and preserves muscle mass, and improves the body's ability to use calories.



Getting Started

Put some thought and planning into your new exercise routine. You want to set a course that you will be able to maintain. One of the primary problems with exercise programs is that people quit after a short time. Things to consider include what activities you want to do, where you want to do them, and how often you want to participate. It is probably a good idea to find a program or class when you are just starting out. A program will provide you with instruction and supervision. Check out local gyms, universities, or hospitals. You may have community resources as well, such as recreation department or civic center. You may want to join a health club or hire a personal trainer.

Safety

Frequently, safety is simply a matter of common sense. You should dress appropriately for the activity, environment, and the weather. If you are using any equipment, make sure it is in proper condition, is appropriate for the activity, and that you know how to use it.

The following are some things you can do to make sure you are exercising safely:



- Start slowly.
- Use safety equipment, such as helmets, knee and elbow pads, and eye protection, to keep you from getting hurt.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Stop if you feel pain.
- Allow your body time to cool down.

Doctor Supervision

Anyone just beginning an exercise regimen should consult a doctor. If you see a doctor regularly he or she may be able to give you a go-ahead on the phone. If not, you should have a complete physical checkup.

Conclusion

Anyone can exercise. Take a walk. Ride a bike. Join a team. Whatever you decide, make physical activity a part of your everyday life. You will see the benefits almost immediately, as you lose weight, lower your blood pressure, and feel better overall.