

2010 March HEALTH NOTES by Evelyn Ames Rounding Third and Moving -- for Healthy Living

“Keep on truckin” makes for living healthily longer, so they say! The January 2010 issue of *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association* reported data from an Australian study that “found that every hour spent in front of the television per day brings with it an 11 percent greater risk of premature death from all causes, and an 18 percent greater risk of dying from cardiovascular disease.”

“Compared with people who watched less than two hours of television daily, those who watched more than four hours a day had a 46 percent higher risk of death from all causes and an 80 percent increased risk for CVD-related death. This association held regardless of other independent and common cardiovascular disease risk factors, including smoking, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, unhealthy diet, excessive waist circumference, and leisure-time exercises.” The researchers suggested that sedentary behavior (e.g., sitting at computer or reading without moving for extended periods of time) may pose health risks. Lead researcher David Dunstan said “even if someone has a healthy body weight, sitting for long periods of time still has an unhealthy influence on their blood sugar and blood fats.” People go from sitting in a chair to sitting in a car to sitting to watch television to sitting to eating to sitting to reading, etc.!

Question: Why not try tapping your feet while reading or watching TV? You burn calories!

The benefits of exercise have been long established, but researchers wanted to know what happens when people sit too much. The study focused on television watching since it is the most common sedentary activity carried out in the home. The findings applied to both obese and overweight people as well as those with a healthy weight. “What has happened is that a lot of the normal activities of daily living that involved standing up and moving the muscles in the body have been converted to sitting,” Dunstan said. “Technological, social, and economic changes mean that people don’t move their muscles as much as they used to - consequently the levels of energy expenditure as people go about their lives continue to shrink. Prolonged periods of sitting are suggested to have an unhealthy influence on blood sugar and blood fat levels.

Determinates of physical activity (exercise) in older adults. Various studies report that personal characteristics (e.g., motivations, self-efficacy, health status, exercise history and skill in performing physical activity) and environmental characteristics (e.g., access, cost, time barriers, and social/cultural supports) influence a person’s physical activity behavior. The determinants within the “personal characteristics” category were found to be most important when exercise plans were designed for older adults (*Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development*, Jan/Feb 2002). Experts rated biomedical status as the most important determinant. The status of health of older adults has an impact on how likely they are to initiate and adhere to exercise. Healthy adults, those with few illnesses or injuries, are more likely to be active and to stay in an exercise program than are people with medical complications. Older adults who are overweight are less likely to stay with a vigorous program but are more likely to respond to moderate activities such as a walking program. The conclusions to the study reported in the above mentioned journal were the following: “Expert health professionals identified biomedical status, past exercise participation, and education, in order of decreasing priority, as most important during the initiation phase. During the adherence phase, the most important determinants were prioritized as biomedical status, then past exercise participation, and finally, SES (socio-economic status).” The researchers concluded that healthier older adults who have a history of exercise are more likely to start and maintain an exercise plan, as well as educating older adults on the benefits of exercise increases the likelihood of them initiating and adhering to an exercise prescription.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT and its effect on maintaining exercise: J. K. Schneider (*Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, April 2004) taught an “experimental group of older adults to recognize negative thoughts related to exercise and to counter these thoughts with more positive ones. She found that CBT was “moderately effective in improving several components of self reported exercise behavior and mildly effective in improving exercise behavior overall.” The three fundamental propositions of CBT are (1) cognitions affect behavior (self-regulation), (2) cognitions (interpretations) may be monitored and altered, and (3) behavior change may be produced through cognitive change (self-regulation). The following table

provides an example of thoughts about exercising as it relates to CBT. It is suggested the reader incorporate the third column (My Behavior) as a means of increasing daily physical activity.

Example of a Thought Log *Journal of Geriatric Physical Therapy Vol. 28; 2:05*

| Exercise situation | Thoughts about the situation | My behavior |
|---|--|--|
| Very warm summer's day. It is too hot to exercise outside. | I'll go to the mall and walk laps. I'll take my walkman to help pass time. | I walked 2 miles and listened to a book on tape! |
| Very busy day of volunteer work. Didn't get home until 5:00 pm | Exercising takes too much work. I'll take a nap and eat dinner. Maybe I'll exercise tomorrow | I did not exercise today. Maybe I should have thought. "Since today was very busy and I plan to walk tomorrow morning, I can still do 20 minutes of theraband exercises while I watch TV." |
| My friend just called to say she isn't feeling well and can't walk with me today. | I'm disappointed but I think I need to walk today, even if by myself. | I walked for 20 minutes around my neighborhood by myself. |

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (U.S. Dept. HHS) recommend muscle –strengthening activities for all major muscle groups two or three times a week and at least two and half hours a week of moderate intensity or one hour and 15 minutes a week of vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity. New research suggests more is better. One caveat: if a person has been leading a sedentary life, adding physical activity to daily living needs to be done gradually. Pumping the weights or riding furiously on a stationary bike often results in pain and sickness which leads to a person stopping working out!

Newsletter Question/activity of the month: Rank order (most to least) these nuts in order of nutritional value: pecans, almonds, walnuts, cashews, hazelnuts, pistachios and peanuts. Answer somewhere in this newsletter!

Answer to "nut" activity:

1. Almonds--highest fiber content; vitamin E
2. Filberts (hazelnuts)--high in tryptophan; vitamin E; may be good for sleep
3. Peanuts (actually not a nut; are legumes)
4. Chestnuts—low in fat
5. Pistachios
6. Walnuts—greatest concentration of omega-3-fatty acids
7. Cashews
8. Pecans