

FEBRUARY 2008

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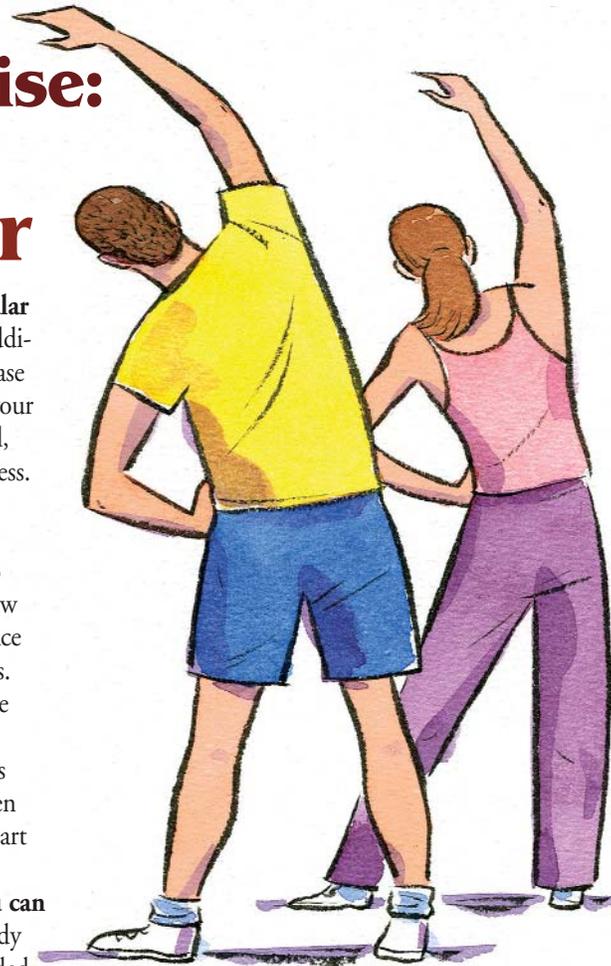
Aerobic Exercise: The Heart of the Matter

Like any muscle, your heart needs regular exercise to maintain its strength. In addition, exercise modifies several heart disease risk factors in beneficial ways: It helps lower your blood pressure, boost HDL (good) cholesterol, control weight and diabetes, and even ease stress.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada considers a sedentary lifestyle to be a major threat to cardiovascular health, equal to smoking and high blood pressure. Studies show that physically active people live longer and face a lower risk of heart disease than inactive folks.

If exercise is so beneficial, why don't more people do it? One reason may stem from a misconception that exercise must be strenuous or requires lots of time to be effective. But even moderate-level activities may help ward off heart disease, diabetes and some types of cancer.

The key is to choose activities that you can perform aerobically – those that get your body moving and raise your heart rate for an extended period of time. These include brisk walking,



dancing, cycling, swimming, and some gardening and household chores.

After 6-10 weeks of aerobic workouts (30 non-stop minutes, minimum 3 times weekly), your heart muscle will strengthen, pumping more oxygen-rich blood with each beat. More oxygen leads to more health benefits.

If you're put off by 30 non-stop minutes of exercise, any increase in physical activity can improve the condition of your heart and blood vessels, and reduce your risk of disease. Build up to a more vigorous regimen and you may add years – and quality – to your life.

Note: Consult your physician before making a major change in your physical activity level.

About the Waist

The size of your waist helps predict your risk for obesity-related health problems, such as cancer, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Waist circumference reflects abdominal fat, which in excess may be more damaging than fat stored mainly in your hips and thighs. To reduce your risk, maintain a waist of less than 35 inches/88cm (women) or less than 40 inches/102cm (men). To measure your waist, place a tape measure snugly around your bare abdomen just above your hipbone.

HEALTH Notes

■ **Have you experienced a mini stroke?** These are transient ischemic attacks (TIAs) – and they are an important warning of more serious problems. TIA symptoms – including dizziness, confusion, severe headache, numbness and diminished sight, speech and walking – match those of full-blown stroke. Because stroke symptoms can come and go quickly, they are often ignored. **Advice:** Even if symptoms fade, call 911 or get to the nearest emergency room immediately (don't drive yourself). At the ER, insist that you are given tests for an accurate diagnosis.

■ **Portable, gas-powered generators come in handy when the power goes out**, especially during cold weather. However, every year people are fatally poisoned by carbon monoxide (CO) produced by generators. **Caution:** Never use a generator inside any structure, including houses, garages and sheds, even if windows and doors are open. Only operate generators outside, far away from the doors, vents and windows of any building.

■ **The most important habit you can break:** tobacco, if you use it. Start by making an appointment with your provider to learn about cessation aids and counselling. When you quit, your blood vessels and heart tissue begin to improve, even in long-term smokers. Risk of premature death starts dropping within the first few weeks; 5-15 years after quitting your chances of heart attack or stroke fall to nearly that of people who never smoked. *It's never too late for better health.*

Giving CARE to Our Elderly

For an estimated 2.1 million Canadians, caring for an elderly family member fills a large part of daily life.

How do you know when it's time to take a more active role in your loved one's care? Here are some signs to watch for:

Physical – weight loss; lack of personal hygiene; more injuries, such as burns, falls or bruising; not eating.

Mental – increasing forgetfulness; frequent disorientation or odd behaviour; paranoia or suspiciousness without real cause; lack of judgment while driving.

How do you communicate your concern? When talking to the person, be sensitive and honest. Put yourself in the position of needing care. Ask questions to learn what the person wants and needs. These conversations can be awkward, but be persistent; you are also being affected by your loved one's health.

What's the best way to introduce changes? Taking care of an ailing elderly person will be a challenging transition for both of you. Before you make any plans about your personal involvement, educate yourself on the legal, financial and medical matters related to your loved one's well-being. For example:

- **Identify the specific health and safety concerns** resulting from the person's disability.
- **Determine the living arrangements** and level of home aid or nursing care available and appropriate for the person.
- **Create a plan for care in stages** – in the home or other facility – should the person's health decline.
- **Learn how to organize your time** and life with the addition of care giving. Arrange for regular help from family, friends or others. Explore services such as home care, meal delivery, transportation, adult day care and respite care for you.

Your loved one may become depressed, anxious or feel a sense of loss over the lifestyle changes, so take small steps at first. Sharing feelings can help put everyone at ease.

7 STEPS to Personal Success

How do successful people get that way? Whether it is in their working careers or personal pursuits, people who achieve success have certain characteristics in common.

It starts with self-esteem and confidence in your ability. Learn the habit of success step-by-step:

STEP 1 Expect success. A positive mental attitude produces positive results. By contrast, if you believe you will fail you probably will.

STEP 2 Have a plan. See your goal clearly and chart a course for reaching it – whether it's something you want to gain in 6 months or 6 years. By staying focused on that target your priorities along the way should become obvious.

STEP 3 Go the extra mile. When you do your best and give more than is asked of you, you will usually benefit in return.

STEP 4 Profit from defeat. You won't master your undertakings without making a few mistakes along the way. Coping with failure builds strength, confidence and wisdom. If you learn

from it and refuse to give up, every defeat can be a step toward success.

STEP 5 Accept responsibility. Only you are accountable for your actions and your future. Welcoming responsibility and challenge is an indication of your ability and self-esteem.

STEP 6 Welcome new ideas. Change is a certainty and new ideas are the seeds of progress. By accepting change and respecting the opinions of others you can't help but grow and succeed.

STEP 7 Keep physically fit. It takes energy to succeed. Don't underestimate the power of exercise, good nutrition and relaxation to maintain your strength and enjoy the journey to success.



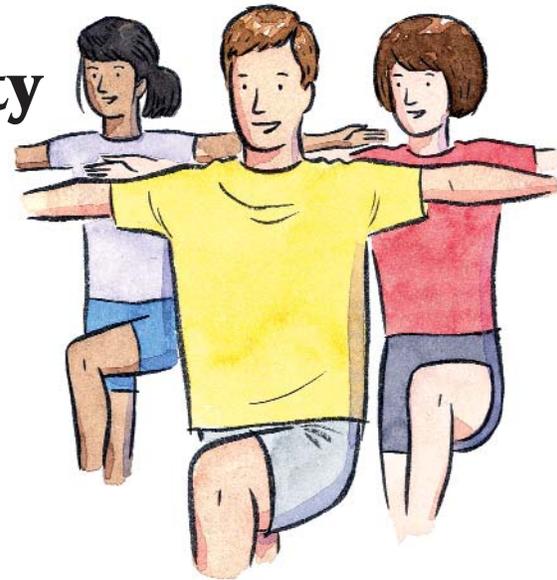
What is Inactivity Costing You?

Health protection is the primary benefit you lose by not exercising regularly.

There is convincing evidence that physical activity can significantly lower the risks for many diseases – colon and breast cancer, blocked arteries, obesity and bone thinning as well as dementia, depression and muscle loss.

If you're not a believer, consider the potential effect of exercise on diabetes. The Diabetes Prevention Program study showed that the risk of developing type 2 diabetes dropped 58% with just 3 ½ hours of weekly aerobic exercise – such as a brisk 30-minute daily walk – coupled with a 5-10% loss of body weight.

For people who have diabetes, medication costs can decline when they adopt a more active lifestyle. From a study published in *Diabetes Care*: People with diabetes began walking or biking and stretching for 50-60 minutes a day, 4-6 days a week. At the end of one month, 16% of the participants taking insulin and 26% of those taking diabetes pills had their treatment switched to diet and exercise therapy alone. For those who



needed to remain on insulin, their total units per day were reduced as much as 60%; in 22% of the people who still needed pills, their doses were reduced or replaced with milder medicines.

If you have diabetes, be sure to ask your provider about the potential of exercise and other lifestyle changes in your treatment program.

While the cost of being sedentary can be high, adding routine exercise is usually not – just put on a good pair of walking shoes and away you go!

OTC Pain Relievers

There are many brands of pain-relieving products available over the counter (OTC). So, when you're in pain and need relief, how do you choose wisely?

Match the pill to the problem. Acetaminophen (generic name) works well for pain or fever. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are a large class of medications that includes ibuprofen. These drugs are useful for inflammation (swelling) as well as pain and fever.

Take only as directed. Read and follow the drug's label directions carefully to avoid side effects. Overdoses or long-term use of acetaminophen may cause liver damage. NSAIDs can lead to gastrointestinal bleeding or kidney injury in some users, even when taken at the correct dose.

Don't mix and combine. Taking any type of pain medicine with alcohol raises the risk of side effects. So can using multiple medicines, especially those containing pain relievers, at the same time.

Best advice: Always consult your healthcare provider before using OTC pain relievers, especially if you are pregnant or have ulcers, high



blood pressure, diabetes, liver or kidney problems. Tell your healthcare provider if your pain persists or you frequently rely on drugs for pain. Use the same healthcare provider and pharmacist for all your medications.

Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP



Q: Supplements for arthritis?

A: Nutritional supplements may help relieve symptoms of osteoarthritis, a common joint problem that develops with age.

Scientists have studied 2 dietary supplements for several years to learn how they affect joints and the supporting cartilage. They found that *glucosamine* stimulates cartilage repair and the production of joint fluid; *chondroitin sulfate* inhibits inflammatory enzymes that break down articular cartilage.

The National Institutes of Health sponsored a study of 1,500 people with osteoarthritis who were taking the supplements. Results: A combination of glucosamine and chondroitin may help people with moderate to severe arthritis, but not those with mild arthritis. Since study flaws may have made it difficult to detect improvements in mild symptoms, more research is needed. (*New England Journal of Medicine*, 2/23/06)

Before taking supplements for your joints, see your provider for a diagnosis. Supplements are not regulated for therapeutic effectiveness, quality or safety, so research product brands before you buy.

Q: Signs of restless leg syndrome?

A: Restless leg syndrome (RLS) is a neurological disorder characterized by unpleasant sensations in the lower legs – burning, tugging, tightening and a feeling like “bugs crawling” inside. While these symptoms primarily occur in the lower legs, they may also affect the arms, hands, thighs and feet.

The cause of RLS is unknown, though it may be related to medical conditions, including diabetes, pregnancy, kidney disease and anemia as well as use of alcohol, caffeine, tobacco and certain medications. RLS can begin at any age, but symptoms most often appear during middle age or later – they vary in severity and duration among both men and women.

Symptoms are milder during the day and become stronger when lying down, relaxing, sitting for long periods and at bedtime – consequently, RLS often triggers sleep problems. Pacing and moving the legs bring some relief.

Diagnosis can be difficult, so if you are having symptoms, keep a record of them, then consult your provider. Medications are available that may help.

CAUTION WITH HOME GADGETS

From shredding to steaming, there's a timesaving device for just about every household chore. Take precautions with these popular home tools.

Paper shredders can chew up evidence of personal identity. But shredders can cut more than your old pay stubs. Shred carefully:

- Unplug your shredder when not in use and before emptying it.
- Keep loose clothing, ties, dangling jewellery and long hair away from the shredder opening.
- Never place your hands or fingers in the opening.
- Keep your shredder out of reach of pets and little fingers – never let children shred, even with adult supervision.

Microwave ovens cut cooking time and retain the nutrients in your vegetables better than boiling or frying. Here's how to avoid problems:

- To avoid burns, always use potholders to remove food: open cooking containers and lids away from your skin.
- Never use metal objects or foil. They can spark and catch fire.
- Only use containers and plastic wrap labelled *microwave-safe*.
- Not safe: brown paper or sealed plastic bags.
- Okay: white microwavable paper towels, parchment and wax paper.

Drip coffee and espresso makers

can produce great drinks for a lot less than coffee-house prices.

Enjoy your cuppa joe with good brewing habits:

- Use a model with automatic shutoff.
- Keep it turned off and unplugged when not in use.
- Let all parts cool before cleaning.
- With espresso makers, wait for the system to de-pressurize and cool before touching or using. Use the steam pipe with caution to avoid burns.



Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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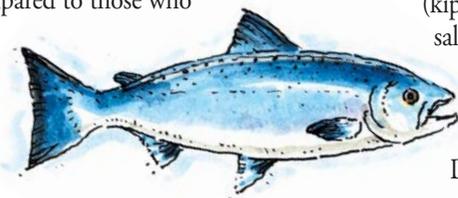
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Hearty Fats: OMEGA-3s

A diet rich with omega-3 fatty acids (DHA plus EPA) has the power to reduce your risk of heart attack, according to many scientists around the globe. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada recommends we consume more polyunsaturated fats, especially omega-3 fats. Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating recommends at least two servings of fatty fish a week, including species such as salmon, herring, mackerel and sardines.

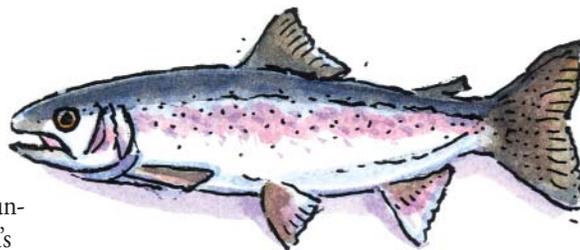
One analysis of 13 studies tracked more than 220,000 people for an average of 12 years – it found that people who ate 5 servings of fish a week had a 40% lower risk of death from heart disease compared to those who ate no fish.



Omega-3 fatty acids are also linked to protection from other disorders, including arthritis, memory loss and macular degeneration as well as cancer, but evidence connected to these conditions is pending.

Studies show that many Canadians don't meet the recommendations for EPA and DHA, let alone the higher amounts some health experts recommend.

Omega-3 supplements? Your body absorbs omega-3s better from food than from pills, and more studies are needed to confirm the benefits of fish oil supplements. High intakes of supplements could be unhealthy for some people; before using them, check with your provider.



Best Omega-3 Fish & Seafood

Adults should aim for 650-1000mg DHA plus EPA per day. For now, experts generally agree that we should eat at least 2 servings of fatty fish every week.

The following species are considered best sources, listed from high to low: herring (kippered), Pacific or Jack mackerel, Atlantic salmon, Bluefin tuna, canned sardines, striped bass, flounder, sole, halibut, Skipjack tuna, haddock, and light canned tuna. These varieties supply 200-1800mg of EPA plus DHA per 3 oz./90g cooked serving.

Note: All fish contain omega-3 fatty acids but amounts vary among products and within species due to their diet and whether fish are wild or farm-raised.



Recipe of the Month

Grilled Salmon Teriyaki

- 1 tbsp/17ml **low sodium soy sauce**
- 1 tbsp/15ml **olive oil**
- 1 tbsp/15ml **molasses** or **honey**
- 2 tsp/4g **green onion**, finely chopped
- 1 tsp/1.8g **ginger**, finely minced or mashed
- 1 tsp/5ml **sesame oil**
- 1 tsp/5ml **rice wine**
- 1 clove **garlic**, minced
- 1 pound/454g **salmon fillet**, cut into 4 pieces
- 1 tbsp/15ml **sesame seeds**

- 1 In glass dish combine all ingredients except salmon and sesame seeds; place salmon in marinade turning to coat each piece. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 hour.
- 2 Set oven on broil. Spray broiler pan rack with cooking spray. Place salmon, skin side down on rack in broiler pan. Broil 4 inches/10cm from heat for 12-15 minutes (depending on fillet thickness), or until fish flakes easily with a fork.
- 3 Sprinkle sesame seeds over fish during last few minutes of cooking.

Nutrition Facts

Makes 4 servings.

Amount Per Serving	Calories	240
	Total Fat	13g
	Sodium	150mg
	Total Carb	5g
	Fibre	0g
	Protein	23g

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