
HEALTH & LIFESTYLE MANAGEMENT

taking care of God's amazing gift
— a balancing act

by Nancy Guebert, R.N.

Leader's Guide

INTRODUCTION

If we thrive on a busy (but not too busy) schedule and enjoy a fast-paced life, we should pursue it. If we're happier living more leisurely, we should do it. We have to discover the lifestyle that best suits us, then live it! To do otherwise — to go against our nature — would be stressful.

Lifestyle Tips

Finding the way to health can be a balancing act. In our rapidly changing world, stress often leads to poor health, loss of energy, depression, and a host of other modern diseases, both physical and psychological. Our bodies are constantly adjusting to the environment. Today we are faced with more choices, new technology, research and information overload.

If all Canadians were sufficiently physically active, the savings to the healthcare system for heart disease alone would be \$776 million a year. Realistically, not everyone will become active. But we can make a dent in the sedentary portion of our population, two-thirds of which is insufficiently active.

Did you know that...

- of all deaths, 50% are related to lifestyle choices.
- women suffer from depression more often than men.
- leading causes of death for men in Canada during 1996 were cancer, heart disease, accidental injury, lung disease and suicide.
- leading causes of death for women in Canada during 1996 were stroke, pneumonia/flu, diabetes and central nervous system disease.
- it costs at least \$2 billion a year to treat obese Canadians.
- one in four Canadians over the age of 65 has heart problems.

DISCUSSION

What does “health” mean to me?

Definition: health

- being well: freedom from sickness; soundness of body
- the general condition of body or mind
- spiritual, moral, or mental soundness
- sound condition; well-being

Definition: lifestyle

- a manner of living
- one's style of life

Stressors which impact on our health and lifestyle

- change — there is a price for every change to which we must adapt.
- moving — when we move from one location to another, we must adjust to a new environment.
- increasing expectations.
- time pressure — more activities, deadlines. No longer are the deadlines we face weekly or daily, but “minute” deadlines.
- work pressure — changes and uncertainty within the work environment.
- loss of control.

- fear - due to insecurity, pressured deadlines, overloaded lives.
- relationships.
- competition.
- overload.
- illness and death - as we live longer we are more susceptible to illness. We are fearful of chronic illness and pain. Death of a family member or friend is a profound stressor.
- frustration and anger.

Why do we mismanage our health and lifestyle?

We are ...

- more active.
- exposed to more change.
- over committed....we can't say no.
- faced with more competition.
- making more decisions with less time.
- in a hurry. We walk fast, talk fast, and eat fast!
- overloaded with more information. We buy more books, read more newspapers, receive e-information.
- exposed to more noise, more pollution, more people.

We have ...

- more fatigue. We are a tired society.
- have more debt.
- more possessions per person. Our closets are full!
- more gadgets, a result of technology.

How much education do we really need?

- We solve one problem only to create another one!
- We waste more!
- Both parents work outside the home.

ACTIVITY

Have the participants complete

- **Worksheet #1, "Fatigue Assessment"** and
- **Worksheet #2, "The Burns Anxiety Inventory."**

DISCUSS.

WHO IS IN CONTROL?

I never ask “Why?” or “Why me?” I can’t see the whole picture. Only God sees that. I live one day at a time and thank God each day for His many blessings.

Gina Boyle, Cancer Survivor

SOME CANADIAN FACTS

Melvin, an absent-minded monk, took a daily walk to read his breviary. Unfortunately Easter Sunday had extra Psalms to read and Melvin walked too far — right off a cliff. Fortunately, he felt something was amiss and grabbed a tree branch. As Melvin’s feet dangled over the canyon, he frantically shouted.

“Help!! Is anyone up there?”

Suddenly the clouds parted and a loud voice boomed.

“I will help you. Are you willing to do whatever I ask?”

“Of course, what do you want me to do?”

“Let go!”

“Who are you?”

“God.”

“Is anyone else up there?”

DISCUSSION

When we experience sickness, aging, a disability or death, what should we do? To whom should we turn?

TURN TO GOD ... HE IS IN CONTROL!!

ACTIVITY

Have participants complete

➤ **Worksheet #3, “Physical Activity and Your Health Quiz.”**

QUIZ ANSWERS

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. d | 10. a |
| 2. a | 11. a |
| 3. a | 12. a |
| 4. a | 13. b |
| 5. d | 14. a |
| 6. b | 15. a |
| 7. b | 16. a |
| 8. a | 17. b |
| 9. a | 18. a |

Most Canadians know why they are not more active. The reasons are lack of time, energy and motivation.

Did you know that...

- inactive people are twice as likely as active people to develop coronary heart disease.
- the risk of cardiovascular disease is up to three times greater for people with diabetes.
- inactive people report more reductions in daily activities as a result of acute health problems.
- those who are inactive during their leisure time are more likely to report days lost from work.
- people with low fitness levels may take twice as many days off work as their very fit counterparts.
- physical activity reduces the risk of colon cancer and possibly the risk of breast cancer and lung cancer.
- physical activity reduces the risk of back problems.
- physical activity reduces the risk of osteoporosis.
- physical activity is accompanied by a reduced risk of obesity.
- physical activity is accompanied by reduced anxiety and stress.
- physical activity helps reduce mild to moderate depression.
- active people enjoy increased psychological well-being.
- active people tend to be more satisfied with their physical shape, appearance and weight.
- for older adults, regular physical activity that includes interaction with others is more likely to increase life satisfaction.

All it takes to achieve most of these health benefits is accumulating 30 minutes of moderate activity each day.

Westerners are more active

The 1995 Physical Activity Monitor conducted by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute shows there are fewer inactive adults as we move from east to west. Adults in Alberta and British Columbia are most likely to be physically active.

How does one explain this difference? Researchers believe that the winter climate enjoyed by westerners, especially residents of British Columbia, and even Albertans who benefit from chinooks, may be more conducive to outdoor physical activity. In any case, close to two-thirds of Canadians in all provinces are not sufficiently active to benefit their health.

Children's activity levels

Two-thirds of Canadian children and youth are not active enough to lay a solid foundation for future health and well-being. According to a 1997 analysis by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, children in the western provinces are more likely (39%) to meet the guidelines for optimal growth and healthy development than children in Quebec (28%).

According to researchers, participation in moderate to vigorous activities:

- enhances psychological well being.
- increases "good" cholesterol levels.
- boosts cardiovascular fitness.

“COUCH POTATOES” EVERYWHERE

Regular physical activity also helps to

- improve self-concept.
- increase self-esteem.
- increase physical competence.
- overcome boredom and provide positive leisure pursuits.

Childhood is the ideal time to develop regular physical activity habits. Childhood is also a prime time for learning the skills required to participate in a wide variety of physical activities which can continue into adulthood.

Almost two-thirds of Canadians put themselves at unnecessary risk of early death, heart disease, adult-onset diabetes, colon cancer, and other medical conditions because they are not active enough. Two-thirds of Canadians aged 25 to 55 are not physically active enough to meet the guidelines for sufficient physical activity set out in Canada’s Physical Activity Guide for Healthy Active Living. A 1997 study showed there is virtually no difference between the physical activity levels of men and women. As many as 66% of women and 67% of men between the ages of 25 and 55 do not meet the requirements of the guide.

Canadians not meeting the guide

Newfoundland	70%
Nova Scotia	72%
New Brunswick	66%
Prince Edward Island	68%
Quebec	67%
Ontario	67%
Manitoba	69%
Saskatchewan	73%
Alberta	67%
British Columbia	59%
Northwest Territories	68%
Yukon	68%

The key message from these statistics is that the majority of adults in each province and territory are inactive, and that physical inactivity is a major issue in every part of Canada. The World Health Organization says that if sedentary living is unchecked, “dramatic increases in life expectancy combined with dramatic changes in lifestyle will lead to global epidemics of cancer and other chronic diseases.”

In 1997, the federal/provincial/territorial government ministers responsible for fitness, active living, recreation and sport set as a joint target a 10% reduction in the proportion of inactive Canadians over the five year period from 1998 to 2003.

Health aims

- to reduce the burden of chronic disease and premature death associated with physical inactivity in Canadians.
- to reduce the burden of unnecessary limitation and dependence associated with aging in activities of daily living caused by physical inactivity in Canadians.
- to encourage people to engage in lifelong physical activity, which promotes and supports individual health, and make a commitment to community health and wellness.

Social aims

- to realize the potential of physical activity, in concert with other comprehensive strategies, to contribute to the resolution of serious social issues such as substance abuse, crime, alienation and the delinquency of youth at risk.
- to provide a support system for healthy social interaction at the family, neighborhood and community levels through opportunities for physical activity.
- to help build healthy communities.

“EXCUSES, EXCUSES”

There are all kinds of reasons why we’re less active than we should be.

ACTIVITY

List excuses you have heard or made for not being active.

The *Campbell Survey on Well-being in Canada* found the biggest perceived obstacles to physical activity are

- lack of time.
- lack of self-discipline.
- lack of a partner.
- lack of ability.

Solutions

- Lack of time

Research now shows that leisure-time activity, using as few as 500 extra calories a week, has important health benefits. Examples: a daily 15-minute walk, one 75-minute bike ride, two hours of gardening.

- Lack of self-discipline

Many people start an activity program because it is good for them. The real secret is finding activities you enjoy. Do this, and you won’t have to coax yourself into activity.

Find activities you enjoy and you'll soon discover how easy it is to fit them into your day. You might even come to say, "Those weren't obstacles at all. I was just making excuses!"

Lifestyle Tips

➤ Lack of a partner

If self-discipline isn't a problem and you don't mind being alone, then choose activities you can do by yourself. If you enjoy socializing, then arrange your schedule so you can be active with a neighbour or friend.

➤ Lack of ability

No one said we have to row against Silken Laumann or play hockey with Patrick Roy in goal. Some things require more ability than others so it is important to choose the right activity at the right level.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The "ups and downs"

The majority of Canadians are aware that physical activity reduces the risk of heart disease, prolongs life and helps maintain a healthy weight. We are, however, less aware of other well-documented benefits.

- better self-esteem
- prevention of other diseases such as adult-onset diabetes and osteoporosis
- reduced stress
- increased energy
- maintenance of functional ability with age
- increased relaxation

Research shows that tangible outcomes like feeling energized, more relaxed and better able to cope with stress, may be evident in as few as four months. Therefore, while many benefits of physical activity are a long-term health investment, we can see other valuable benefits relatively quickly.

It is never too late to experience benefits from physical activity. Now is the time to become active to minimize the risks or effects of heart disease, feel energized, be better able to relax and, for older adults, maintain the strength, endurance and flexibility to do everyday tasks independently.

Activities we enjoy

ACTIVITY

List what you think are the top 12 activities in Canada.

ANSWER

The physical activities most reported by Canadians continue to be walking and gardening. Other activities cited were swimming, home exercise, social dancing, and bicycling. Next in line were bowling, skating, jogging/running, weight training, golf and baseball/softball.

Top 12 activities in Canada, age 18+

Walking	86%
Gardening	75%
Swimming	54%
Home Exercise	54%
Social dancing	50%
Bicycling	47%
Bowling	30%
Skating	30%
Jogging	29%
Weight training	29%
Golf	26%
Baseball	25%

Both men and women ranked walking, gardening, swimming, home exercise, social dancing and bicycling as their top six activities. However, men and women tend to participate in different types of activities. More women than men participate in activities such as walking, home exercise, social dancing and exercise classes/aerobics, whereas men more frequently cite participation in activities such as bicycling, jogging, weight training, golf, badminton, alpine skiing, tennis and team sports such as baseball, basketball, volleyball, hockey, soccer, and football.

Activities for every age

Here is a profile of common activities in each age group.

Young adults (18-24)

Walking and dancing are popular with 18- to 24-year-olds. As well, two-thirds of men and women also participate in home exercise, gardening, or bicycling. Close to 60% indicate they participate in swimming, jogging or weight training. Finally between one-quarter and one-half indicate participation in bowling, skating, basketball, baseball, in-line skating, volleyball badminton, exercise classes, golf, tennis, or alpine skiing.

Adults (25-44)

Walking and gardening are the most popular activities among 25- to 44-year-olds. Other popular activities include swimming, bicycling, dancing socially and exercise at home. Between one quarter and one-half of men and women in this age group also participate in skating, bowling, weight-training, jogging, golf or baseball.

Middle-aged adults (45-64)

The two most popular activities, walking and gardening are also the highest among 45- to 64-year-olds. Home exercise, social dancing, swimming, and bicycling are also reported.

Older adults (65+)

Walking is the most popular activity with adults aged 65 and older. Next comes gardening. Some mentioned home exercise, swimming or dancing socially.

At what stage are you?

Becoming active occurs in stages. You will take some steps forward and some steps backward. In the normal course of things, over time people adopt physical activity, maintain it for a while, stop it and re-adopt it.

ACTIVITY

Where do you stand? Check the statements on
➤ **Worksheet #4, “Where do you stand?”**
that best describe your current physical activity program.

ANSWERS

1. I am not currently active, I have not done any activity for a long time, and I have no intention of becoming active in the near future.

Right now, you are in a stage of pre-contemplation. Individuals in this stage sometimes report difficulties such as illness or an injury as a barrier to participation. Less than 2% of the Canadian population are at the pre-contemplation stage.

➤ **TIP:** Read about the benefits of physical activity.

2. I am not currently active, I have not been active over the past 12 months, but I intend to be so in the foreseeable future.

You are currently in the contemplation stage. Only 4% of Canadians are contemplators. They are aware that being inactive is a problem and are seriously considering taking some steps to address the problem.

➤ **TIP:** Try substituting active behaviours for sedentary behaviours. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk or bike for short errands. Play with the kids.

3. I was active at times during the last 12 months, I am no longer active, but I intend to resume physical activity in the future.

For now you are in relapse from physical activity, along with 16% of Canadians. You are at greater risk of relapse if you are 25 to 44 years old and if you are a woman, perhaps because of family responsibilities.

➤ **TIP:** Plan how you can get around the obstacle that tripped you in the first place.

4. I have recently become active after a period of irregular or no activity over the past 12 months and I intend to stay active.

You are on the way to developing a crucial health habit. You have lots of company.

➤ **TIP:** Seek and use the support of caring friends in your attempts toward exercise. If you miss a session, make a point of getting to the next one to regain your momentum.

5. I have been regularly active for the past 12 months. I am currently active, and I intend to stay active.

Congratulations! You have achieved a stable pattern of physical activity and are in the company of 34% of Canadians in the maintenance stage.

➤ **TIPS:** Keep your activity program interesting by including a variety of activities. Lend a hand to those who need a gentle nudge to become regularly active.

SETTING GOALS FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Here are six steps for setting inspiring goals.

Determine what you want.

➤ What do you want to enjoy or feel from physical activity? Relaxation? Closeness to nature? Companionship? Write it down. That is your goal.

Set realistic goals.

➤ Setting the high jump mark three metres high wouldn't ensure you can jump that high. If anything, it would de-motivate you before you even started. Learn to reach more modest, achievable goals first.

Focus on the doing.

➤ Choose process goals over product goals. A process goal focuses on doing physical activity. A product goal focuses on the performance, the result. An example of a process goal would be "walking to work three times a week." Here success depends on your involvement rather than your performance.

Give yourself a time limit.

➤ If you don't find an activity motivating at first, give yourself some short-term objectives. A weekly goal may give you many occasions to succeed. This will build your motivation.

Make it convenient.

➤ There is a wide range of activities available, some less structured, some more structured. Activities requiring less equipment, less money, and less commuting may be most convenient. Keep your activities close to home or office whenever you can. They will require less effort.

Make it regular, yet flexible.

➤ People with time restraints may prefer flexible rather than stringent scheduling. Select a few convenient times — during lunch, immediately after

WISE WAYS TO WEIGHT CONTROL

work — and do something at that time every day. Have a plan to replace your missed sessions.

Research tells us that sedentary or low level active Canadians are most likely to be overweight. Those who are at least moderately active are much less likely to be carrying around unwanted pounds. Studies also show that many overweight people do not rate physical activity as an important part of a weight-loss or weight-control routine.

To maintain a healthy weight, it is essential to keep physical activity on the agenda. Here are a few tips to help:

Do it daily! — or almost daily. Research shows that people who are active at least every other day are much more likely to be in the healthy-weight range than those who are active less often. Frequency of activity each week is more important for weight control than how vigorously or how long you are in motion.

Be creative. Look for ways to include physical activity in your daily routine. Climb the stairs instead of taking the elevator. Choose active transportation — bus and walk, cycle, commute, every chance you get.

Do what is right for you. If you will be setting aside time for exercise, do things that suit your disposition. Be sure to participate with family or friends if socializing is an important part of the activity.

Lose weight, not heart. If you are trying to lose weight, don't despair. Remember, physical activity increases muscle tone so you may gain muscle while losing fat and inches. Your weight may not decrease significantly, but your body shape improves. Don't rely solely on the scale for signs of progress. Consult your mirror and check the fit of your clothes as well.

Be patient. Developing the activity habit, getting fit, and losing weight take time. Don't rush or force things. Look for improvement over the long term, not overnight.

WORK OUT YOUR STRESS

If we thrive on a busy (but not too busy) schedule and enjoy a fast-paced life, we should pursue it. If we're happier living more leisurely, we should do it. We have to discover the lifestyle that best suits us, then live it! To do otherwise — to go against our nature — would be stressful.

Lifestyle Tips

In our stressful world few can say that nothing is taxing or exceeding their coping abilities. Long trips to work. Slow-moving traffic. Line-ups at the store. Difficult meetings. Demanding children. Too much to do in too little time. We all face stressors like these. For our health's sake, it is important to recognize them and learn to deal properly with them.

The body responds to stress — little irritations and big problems — in a number of ways. There is an increased release of adrenaline into the blood stream, muscles tense, breathing quickens, and heart rate and blood pressure go up. This reaction — known as the “fight or flight” response — was important in primitive times. At that time movement was crucial to survival. Human beings did, in fact, fight or flee.

This natural response to stress is still with us, but unlike earlier times, we usually can't “put up” or run. We have to take our time and deal with things more calmly. The Health Promotion Survey conducted in the early 90s showed that almost 50% of Canadians led a fairly stressful life, and an additional 12% led a very stressful life.

ACTIVITY

Try the abbreviated version of the “**Life Change Index**” in **Worksheet #5**.

The full version of the Life Change Index contains 43 stressful events. Individuals scoring 300 or more on the full version have an 80% likelihood of illness in the near future. For those scoring between 150 and 299, the likelihood decreases to 50%. Below 150, the likelihood of illness is rated at 30%.

Steps for taking charge

Research shows that physical activity helps alleviate emotional distress by

- promoting relaxation.
- acting as a time out.
- providing a psychological distraction.
- changing one's mood.
- enhancing self-esteem and feeling of competence.
- providing a time and an opportunity to work through problems.
- generally regulating emotional and physiological reactions to a stressful event.

What can we do to counter stress; to take better control of our lives? Here are a few suggestions.

- Learn to relax. The first thing we can do is adopt a relaxed attitude toward life. We can smile and listen to music in that slow-moving traffic or talk to our neighbour in the check-out line.
- Schedule physical activity into your day. Choose enjoyable and convenient activities.

EXERCISE YOUR WAY TO HEALTH

- **Know yourself.** For some people, regular physical activity doesn't reduce stress and tension. For others, relaxation does not help. We're all different, so what works for one person isn't always the "ticket" for another.

While physical activity has powerful disease prevention properties, it can also play a role in curing and managing diseases.

Cancer – Sedentary people tend to have a higher risk of colon cancer and breast cancer than active people. Active living contributes multiple health benefits to cancer patients.

Diabetes – Physical inactivity and a sedentary lifestyle make diabetic symptoms and complications even worse. The type of diabetes that starts in adulthood can be controlled totally or in part with a regular exercise and nutrition program.

Mental disturbances – Physical activity can reduce the negative symptoms of dementia such as Alzheimer's disease. It can also temper other mental disturbances in older adults. Being active reduces anxiety, tension and depression, improves sleep quality, induces relaxation, reduces the need for drugs, improves social interaction and reduces disruptive behaviours.

Arthritis – Physical activity can eliminate or reduce the need for pain medications in people with osteoarthritis. However, a lack of activity increases the risk of osteoarthritic symptoms.

Osteoporosis – Evidence suggest that exercise retards the rate of bone loss. Without exercise, bones tend to weaken with age and can reach a critical level in older adults, leaving individuals susceptible to fractures. As many as one in four women and one in eight men will develop osteoporosis which sometimes results in fatal fractures of the hip. Weight-bearing exercise, where people carry their weight on one leg at a time as in walking, and resistance training are needed to maintain and even strengthen bones.

Hormonal problems – There are growing indications that regular exercise helps retard the loss of hormone function. Growth hormone, a builder of lean tissue, decreases with age but is released during exercise in the young and old. Cortisol, a stress-fighting hormone tends to stay too long in the blood of older people. Physical activity helps keep it down. The same is true for insulin, the sugar-controlling hormone. Norepinephrine, a waistline-destroying hormone, tends to be produced in abundance with age but can be kept in check by physical activity.

FUEL UP! NUTRITION FOR LIFE

Lung disease – Exercise cannot restore damaged lung tissue but it can improve greatly lung endurance. People who have experienced progressive breathlessness due to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (a disease strongly linked to smoking) sometimes find that trying to exercise leads to severe breathlessness, and therefore a lack of enthusiasm for physical activity.

The *Campbell Survey on Well-Being in Canada* tells us a great deal about our current health practices. It shows that our dietary habits are improving. It tells us that one quarter of Canadians consistently follow Canada's Food Guide for healthy eating. In recent years, many Canadians report eating more poultry, fish, fruit, vegetables, while consuming fewer total calories.

In spite of these changes, there is still much confusion over what to eat and why. There are many misconceptions about nutrition and weight loss.

NUTRITION MYTHS

MYTH: It costs more to eat nutritiously.

Many of the least nutritious foods are the most costly items in a grocery cart. Yes, you should pay attention to buying produce in season and avoid paying the manufacturer or the clerk at the grocery store to do your meal preparation, but basic foods are usually the least expensive.

MYTH: Cholesterol-free foods are a healthier choice.

Not necessarily! Some foods that have no cholesterol may be loaded with fat, which is a much greater threat to health. Conversely, eggs contain cholesterol in the yolk, but they are very rich in many important nutrients. Watch out for baked goods made with hydrogenated vegetable oils, they may not contain cholesterol, but have a lot of saturated fat.

MYTH: You would be healthier if you cut out red meat.

It is a good idea to avoid too much fat from any source, and it is wise to buy lean meat and trim the fat before cooking. But the minerals, especially iron and zinc, found in red meat make it a valuable part of the diet. In the past some people perhaps chose a serving of meat that was too large, but there is definitely a place in the diet for reasonable amounts of lean red meat.

MYTH: Foods today are full of dangerous chemicals.

All foods are made up of chemicals. Certain processed foods have small amounts of approved chemicals added to increase their safety, shelf-life, appearance, texture, or taste. What we seem to have forgotten is that it's "the dose that makes the poison" - anything consumed in large enough quantities

can be toxic. In small amounts, preservatives and additives are not harmful and are infinitely preferable to moldy or rancid food.

MYTH: Low-fat foods are healthier, but take the joy out of eating.

This need not be so. Many low-fat and fat-reduced products now on the market rate high on taste. Breads, cereals, fruits, and vegetable can taste great, and are invariably low in fat. Lean meat is readily available as are low-fat milk and milk products. Unfortunately no one has come up with a perfect low-fat donut!

NUTRITION TIPS

Eat the real thing — food! A proper diet provides all the nutrients you need for an active lifestyle.

Go for balance. Aim for a diet with about 55-60 % carbohydrate, 25-30 % fat, and 15 % protein. The following recommended daily servings will give this balance: milk (2 servings), grain products (5 servings), meat and alternatives (2 servings), and vegetables and fruits (5 servings). For low fat choices, skim milk is an obvious one. In the meat and alternatives group, you could choose lean beef, pork, lamb, fish, skinless poultry, or peas and beans.

“Top up.” The daily servings noted above are minimums. If you’re still hungry, eat extra grain products, vegetables and fruit — or drink a glass of low-fat milk. An adequate diet will give you enough protein to maintain muscle mass — or even to increase it — when combined with proper training. A proper diet will also provide sufficient carbohydrates to fuel your physical activity.

Peak for performance. When eating meals two to three hours before intense activity, choose foods low in fat and protein and high in carbohydrates. Breads, cereals, potatoes, rice, pasta, and fruit all fill the bill! Immediately following your activity session, the meal should be rich in carbohydrates and contain some protein.

Keep cool. With all the talk of food, don’t forget the fluids! To avoid dehydration, drink plenty of cool water before, during and after physical activity, even if you don’t feel thirsty.

SUCCESSFUL AGING!

“How old would you be if you didn’t know how old you was?” This question, once posed by the great baseball pitcher Satchel Paige is a good one. It gets to the heart of how much attitude affects the way we age. Paige had more to say on this. He saw fit to include advice for older adults in his now famous ‘*Rules for Living.*’ His sixth and final rule warned, “Don’t look back, something may be gaining on you.”

Age has a way of creeping up on us. In the past, we tended to accept a gradual physical decline as a natural part of aging. But research now shows that as much as one half of the decline between the ages of 30 and 70 is due not to aging itself but to an inactive way of life.

Research shows that regular exercise in later years will counter come of the natural loss in heart and lung function. In fact, physical activity can improve function by the equivalent of 10 to 15 years of aging. Some benefits of regular physical activity include:

- keeping bones dense and strong and helping maintain mobility in the joints
- improving blood circulation and keeping muscles supple and strong
- assisting in weight control
- maintaining balance, coordination, and agility and reducing the likelihood of falls
- reducing tension and fatigue, providing extra energy, and leads to better sleep.

Aging does not have to result in a major decline of the body. Physical activity studies related to older adults found that a physically active lifestyle is a “fountain of youth.”

ACTIVITY

Test your knowledge of physical activity by determining whether the statements on **Worksheet # 6, “Physical Activity, True or False”** are true or false.

Now compare the participants’ answers to the following explanations.

1. Statement one is true. The decline in cardiovascular fitness in less active adults results in a diminished reserve for strenuous exercise. The good news is that aerobic exercise at moderate to high intensity improves cardiovascular fitness. All that is required is an activity such as brisk walking that makes you feel warm or sweat a little, breathe harder and feel your heart beating faster.

2. Statement two is false. Aerobic fitness increases memory and reaction time.

3. Statement three is true. Muscle strength declines with age, but training programs over several weeks can lead to great gains in strength among

older adults. In frail individuals especially, increased muscle activity can reverse serious functioning difficulties caused by sedentary living, and substantially improve prospects for independent living.

4. Statement four is false. Fear of injury through physical activity is unnecessary worry. With common sense, progressive training and opportunity for rest you can avoid most injuries.

5. Statement five is true. Physical activity can improve leg and ankle strength, which can reduce the risk of falling. External factors such as poor lighting, scatter rugs, cluttered floors, or ice cause many falls. With appropriate planning, these can be either eliminated or minimized. An active lifestyle will take care of intrinsic factors, such as muscle weakness, poor reaction time and dizziness.

6. Statement six is partially true. Physical activity lowers blood pressure in people with high blood pressure. It does not lower blood pressure in people with normal blood pressure.

7. Statement seven is true. Most of the information on coronary heart disease comes from men aged 40 to 50, but it shows that moderate exercise protects against heart disease and deaths from all causes. Active older people have the heart fitness of adults many years younger.

8. Statement eight is true. Statistics show that 44% of older women die of heart disease compared with 41% of men.

9. Statement nine is false. Sedentary older adults who have reduced joint mobility can improve their flexibility with stretching exercises at any age. Tying shoelaces, climbing stairs or playing golf can all become easy with adequate joint mobility.

10. Statement ten is false. People taking up sedentary living increase their health risks significantly and should be consulting their physicians.

HELPFUL TIPS TO “THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH”

The nice thing is that one does not have to be super active to realize the benefits of physical activity. You must do what is right for you.

➤ **Check up first.** If you have any health concerns, see your doctor before increasing your level of physical activity. If you suffer from arthritis, for example, your doctor can tell you if you should avoid any activities or exercises.

➤ **Stretch and strengthen.** Active chores around home, yard work, a simple exercise routine — these can help you maintain strength and flexibility.

RESTORING A HEALTHY BALANCE

This in turn will help with balance and coordination and reduce your likelihood of trips and falls.

➤ **Keep moving.** Walking and wheeling, golfing and cycling, swimming and more. These kinds of activities will give you extra capacity to get through the day with less fatigue and effort. As you grow older, don't let physical abilities or your attitude stand between you and an active life. Active living can improve your quality of life and help you remain independent. Here are some tips for older adults who want to be 'modest movers.'

➤ **Do things you enjoy.** Walking, gardening, golfing, cycling are all great. So are exercise classes. There are lots of activities too. Choose activities you will find enjoyable and satisfying.

➤ **Establish a routine.** Retired or not, set up a routine that suits your lifestyle and your schedule. What's the best time of day for activity? The time that's just right for you!

➤ **Use rewards.** Rewards help some people persist, so use them if you like them. Reward yourself for goals achieved. It is your program, you decide the prize.

➤ **Don't rush.** Set aside enough time so you don't have to rush. Remember that your activity is supposed to be your recreation. You should finish relaxed and refreshed.

Regular activity will improve your physical fitness and that is just as important at age 67 or 77 as it is at 7 or 17. If you're active and fit, you have a better chance of living up to the ancient Greek saying which talks of "dying young, at a very old age."

Finding the way to health can be a balancing act. In our rapidly changing world, stress often leads to poor health, loss of energy, depression, and a host of other modern diseases, both physical and psychological.

WORDS FROM THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

"Say to him, 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours'" (1 Samuel 25:6).

The benefits of wisdom

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your

paths straight. Do not be wise in your eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones (Proverbs 3:5-8).

“My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man’s whole body” (Proverbs 4:20-22).

Emotional health

“A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones” (Proverbs 15:30).

Through illness we find strength

“Lord by such things men live; and my spirit finds life in them too. You restored me to health and let me live” (Isaiah 38:16).

God’s promise

“But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds declares the Lord, because you are called an outcast, Zion for whom no one cares” (Jeremiah 30:17).

“Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security” (Jeremiah 33:6).

God’s desire for his people

“Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well” (3 John 2).

RESTORING THE BALANCE IN OUR LIVES

- Cultivate a nurturing support system: friends, family, community, church.
- Reconcile relationships.
- Serve one another.
- Rest.
- Laugh-humour is medicine. Laughter is a gift from God.
- Cry. A study indicated that those who cry more get sick less often. “Laughter lifts and crying cleanses.”
- Offer thanks.
- Be rich in faith.
- Don’t feel guilty when you say ‘no.’ Take time for yourself.
- Hope. “Hope is the essential ingredient to make it through life. It is the anchor of the soul. Those without Christ may see only a hopeless end, but the Christian rejoices in an endless hope.”

“Christ Jesus is our hope.” Because of our faith in God, Christian hope survives. “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of

“God is not a blurry power living somewhere in the sky, not an abstraction like the Greeks proposed, not a sensual superhuman like the Romans worshipped, and definitely not the absentee Watchmaker of the Deists. God is “personal.” He enters into people’s lives, messes with families, shows up in unexpected places, chooses unlikely leaders, calls people to account. Most of all, God loves.” Philip Yancey, Christianity Today, January 11, 1999.

the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character; and character hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:1-5).

Hope and faith; through the eyes of a child

“Two things you need to get through all the things that happen in the course of having cancer are faith and hope. Trust me, it will be hard going through life with cancer. But it will even be tougher to get through without hope and faith. In fact, those are the two things I depend on the most. When I learned that a tumor had started to grow again, I thought I would never be able to get through life. But I knew that I had to have faith in the Lord. So, as I did before, I handed my thoughts to the Lord. I have to admit, sometimes I start to wonder if He’s really helping me. Then my mom reminds me of the things He has done for me. Then I realize that He really is helping me. So, if you start to feel run-down, think of the Lord and of all the things He is doing and all He has done to help you”

➤ Love. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Colossians 3:14

EVERYDAY STRATEGIES

- Take responsibility.
- Change habits.
- Be realistic.
- Stick with it.
- Sleep. Sleep is God’s idea. “In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat -for He grants sleep to those He love” (Psalm 127:2). Value sleep. Develop healthy sleep patterns. Insomnia can be “talk time” with God. Don’t oversleep.
- Exercise — for sounder sleep, for improved appetite, to reduce weight, for muscles, for flexibility, for mind and spirit.
- Diet — Drink water, reduce fat intake, replace processed snacks with fruit, avoid overeating, have a balanced diet, “garden direct or buy direct — God’s way or the factory way,” “McStay at Home!”
- Time — personal, family, sharing, and God

MAINTAINING OUR HEALTH

- physical rest
- emotional rest
- spiritual rest

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in

heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

- Gain control over our lives.
- Place God at the centre of all things.
- Rest and renewal: thinking time, Bible study, prayer.
- God is the great physician: Thank God, repent, do some surgery-take away the “time cancers” and the “energy tumors.” Heed God’s direction for He is the road to health.

A HEALTHY BALANCE

STOP

putting ourselves in jeopardy

apologizing for what we are not

wishing others were more thoughtful or helpful

agonizing over how things should be

believing in magic

START

taking care of ourselves

rejoicing in everything we are

asking for what we want and need

making the best use of the world “as is”

believing in God

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Health Canada and Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 1998, *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*.

Research File from Physical Activity Monitor, *Lifestyle Tips*:

Series 1998

Warning to couch potatoes
Westerners more active
Children in the East less active
Wise ways to weight control
The long and short of physical activity
Two-thirds are couch potatoes
Couch potatoes everywhere
Activities we enjoy
Activities for every age

Series 1997

What stage are you at?
1997 Physical Activity Monitor

Series 1996

Physical activity a fountain of youth
Fend off health problems with activity
Being active is believing
No time, no energy, no motivation
Did you know?

Series 1995

Motivating yourself to be active
Our relationship with physical activity
Setting goals for physical activity
Contemplating exercise?
Work out your stress
Health at your toetips

Series 1994

Heart Health Quiz
Exercise your way to self-esteem
Exercise a plus for mental health

Series 1993

Fuel up! Nutrition for an active life
Use it or lose it
Do as I do

Series 1992

Active living-for a lifetime
Movin' for your heart's sake
Nutrition mythconceptions

A physical activity balance sheet
Excuses, excuses

Series 1991

Stress; steps for taking charge
Getting active your own way
Successful aging
Tips for an active life

Swenson, Richard, 1992, *Margin, Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overload Lives*, Navpress.