



## **Week 6: March 7-13 Move It**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides a questionnaire in every state that asks adults lifestyle questions. One of the questions is, “Do you get 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity five or more days per week or at least 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity three or more days per week?” Fifty-eight percent of Alabamians that completed the questionnaire answered “yes” to this particular question. Individuals that answered “no” to this question are categorized as sedentary individuals.

This question asks specifically about 30 minutes of moderate exercise or 20 minute of vigorous activity because studies show these exercise techniques as the minimum amount of activity needed for improved health. The risk for many health problems increases when individuals do not exercise. On the other hand, if they become more physically active, the risk for many diseases decreases and mental status improves.

The CDC recognizes the following as the most notable benefits of physical activity:

### **1. Weight control**

### **2. Reduced risk of cardiovascular disease**

Heart disease and stroke are two of the leading causes of death in the United States. By completing 150 minutes of exercise a week, not only will you decrease the chances of heart disease and stroke, but you will also lower blood pressure and cholesterol.

### **3. Reduced risk of type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome**

Physical activity helps decrease risk of type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome – a condition in which a person has a combination of too much fat around the waist, high blood pressure, low HDL cholesterol, high triglycerides or high blood sugar.

### **4. Reduced risk of some cancers**

People who are physically active have a reduced risk of breast cancer and colon cancer, as compared to those who are not physically active. Some research also suggests that physical activity reduces the chance of endometrial and lung cancer. Studies have also shown that physical activity can improve the quality of life for cancer survivors.

### **5. Strengthens bones and muscles**

As you get older it is important to protect your bones and muscles because they support your body and help you move. Being physically active helps strengthen bones and muscles, and has even been found to help with arthritis.

**6. Improves mental health and mood**

Performing regular physical activity helps with thinking, learning and judgment skills. Research also shows that it can reduce the risk of depression and aid with sleeping.

**7. Improves ability to perform daily activities****8. Increases chances of living longer**

What are benefits of physical activity that you think are important for your overall health?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Solutions to Our Exercise Excuses

Listed below are eight common reasons (excuses and barriers) for not exercising. Below each reason is a potential solution.

**1. Too tired**

Remember that exercise generates energy. Therefore, the more you exercise, the more energy you will have.

**2. Weather (too cold or hot, raining or humid)**

Indoor activities are readily available.

**3. Not enough time**

Physically inactive people have just as much free time as exercisers. It all depends on setting priorities and scheduling time to exercise. Here are suggestions on how to overcome the excuse of a busy schedule:

- Schedule exercise time.
- If there is not a full 30 minutes during the day, break it up into 10 or 15 minute segments.
- Get up a few minutes early and take a brisk walk; use 15 minutes of the lunch hour to walk the stairs; walk the dog or lift weights after work.
- Keep a calendar of the completed workouts to track progress and stay motivated.

**4. Gym memberships are too expensive, and I can never find time to go to the gym.**

A gym membership is not required to be physically active. Walking is available anytime, anywhere. Dumbbells are inexpensive and can be used for a variety of exercises. There are also innumerable workout videos available for the home exerciser.

### **5. Good intentions, but follow-through is lacking.**

For now, just concentrate on a daily habit. People often quit because they schedule too many workouts, work too hard and/or don't give themselves rest days, or miss one workout and begin to make up more excuses not to go, etc. If participants complain of being tired, stressed or bored with their physical activity plan, suggest changing the routine every 4 to 6 weeks by trying something new or changing the intensity or time. Encourage positive self talk to recall realistic goals and how far they have come. Even the first day of a new plan represents moving in the correct direction. Remind participants to start where they are, not where they want to be. Encourage small goals, such as:

- Being more active every day by taking the stairs and moving around more.
- Getting up 10 minutes early to walk or lift weights.

These tactics sound more realistic than getting up an hour early to run 2 miles!

### **6. Feel intimidated by all those machines at the gym?**

Most gyms have trainers (or staff people) who can explain the correct use of the machines. Don't hesitate to use them. They may even be able to show alternative methods to tailor the activity to your individual special needs.

And, if going to the gym is not an option, there are many magazines, books, videos and Web sites that cover everything from cardio to stretching exercises.

### **7. Really hate to exercise**

Perhaps you are thinking about exercise the wrong way. What is it about the exercise that is unappealing? Is it sweating when you exercise? Is it the gym? Perhaps it is just the thought of "exercise." The most important thing is to be physically active. You should understand that is okay if you are not necessarily getting ready for a marathon! A key to happiness in exercise is finding something you enjoy and taking the time to do it.

Think through the reasons why you dislike exercise, and find activities that match your personality. If you love the outdoors, maybe you should try hiking or biking. If you appreciate simplicity, maybe walking is your exercise of choice. Try to challenge yourself to plan an event with friends or family around a physical activity instead of around food.

### **8. Exercise hurts**

Muscles don't have to hurt to reap the benefits of physical activity. When doing cardiovascular exercise, remind participants they should be able to carry on a conversation. They should not be huffing and puffing. When it comes to weight training, participants should feel a slight burning, but not teeth-gritting pain!