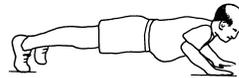


Improving Your Health: Section 4

Preventive health care means more than getting regular checkups by a doctor and a dentist. It also means making good decisions about your health. To make good health decisions, you should know:

- how much physical activity you need,
- what kind of physical activity you can do to help your body stay healthy,
- what foods you should eat to stay healthy, and
- how to plan and prepare healthy meals.

Physical Activity



Preventive care is also doing *physical activity* to stay healthy. Healthy physical activity makes your heart, bones, *muscles*, and *joints* strong. It also helps you to *control weight*, *lower stress*, sleep better, and *reduce the risk of diseases*, such as diabetes and *high blood pressure*.

Health professionals say that you should have 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity most days. Moderate physical activity is a mix of how hard you are working when you do the activity, how long you do the activity, and how often you do the activity. For example, stair-walking for 15 minutes 5 days a week is the same moderate physical activity as walking quickly for 30 minutes 5 days a week.

You may find it hard to do 30 minutes of physical activity at one time. If so, you can do physical activity for 10 minutes 3 times a day.

You don't need to spend much money to do physical activity. Community centers and park districts have *free or low-cost* activities. And why pay for a gym or health club when you can do activities in your home and other places? You don't need to buy special equipment. For example, you can climb stairs in your home or other buildings. You can lift weights using food cans. You can walk instead of driving or taking the bus. Also, you don't need to buy special clothes. You can wear any comfortable clothing while doing physical activity.



Many people don't do physical activity because they don't like to play sports. But there are many kinds of physical activity you can do besides sports. Moderate physical activity can be cardiovascular or strength/resistance training. *Cardiovascular activities* make your heart work harder and better. For these activities, you can walk, run, climb stairs, and ride bikes. *Strength/resistance activities* use your body or weights to make your muscles stronger. For these activities, you can work with weights, such as barbells or food cans. Health professionals say that you should do both kinds of moderate physical activity.

Health professionals also say that you should set up a plan for physical activity. A plan tells what, when, where, and how long you will do physical activity. It will be easier for you to do regular physical activity if you make a plan. It is a good idea to call your doctor about your plan before you start your physical activity if you have a serious health problem.

Sometimes you may feel sore/soreness after physical activity. For example, if you climb the stairs for 15 minutes, your leg muscles may feel sore the next day. Some soreness is okay, but if you feel pain, you should stop the activity and talk to a health professional.