

Walk Kansas

celebrate healthy living

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Functional Fitness Matters

Most people would probably say they exercise to improve their quality of life and to be able to continue doing things they like to do. Being independent and self-sufficient is important to most people. You can be toned and fit as a result of lifting weights, with ideal posture created by a gym machine, yet hurt your back when you try to lift a 50-pound suitcase or struggle to place a large bag of lawn fertilizer into the trunk of your car. That is because your muscles, while strong, are not working together. You need to improve your functional fitness.

Functional exercises are ones that simulate things you do at home, at work, and in daily life, and teach your muscles to work together. For example, squats are a functional exercise, and doing squats will make it easier for you to rise up and down from a chair and pick things up from the floor.

Another example of functional exercise is a bent-over row where you lean over a bench, weight in one hand with your arm hanging straight down. Pull the weight up with your elbow pointing to the ceiling until your upper arm is parallel to the ground.

This exercise works your whole body, especially



Functional Fitness — Why it Matters

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muscles in your shoulders, arms, and back. Compare this to the motion of a nurse bending over a bed to transfer a patient, or when you hoe or remove weeds in the garden. A carpenter would use this movement while bending over and sawing a piece of wood. The bent-over row applies to many things you do in real life.

When muscles are working together, you are more stable and have better balance. To achieve functional fitness, you have to first teach your body to control and balance its own weight. An easy place to start is by balancing on one foot when you are standing in line at the grocery store or when brushing your teeth. When you are able to balance effectively, try a one-legged squat. This might sound easy, but it is not.

Most of the strengthening exercises introduced through videos on the Walk Kansas website are functional exercises because they rarely isolate one muscle. Each exercise is designed to teach muscles to work together. This week, try leg curls on a stability ball (you can also do these without a ball) and core strengthening exercises.

Videos are located at <http://www.walkkansas.org/p.aspx?tabid=66>.

2014 Success Stories

My husband and I have been able to exercise some every single day of Walk Kansas! I have worked on deep breathing exercises as well as posture — keeping my core tight while walking. I also have tried to stretch some each day before walking.

— Coffey County

I set my phone to remind me to move every hour and kept weights at my desk for quick 5-minute workouts and during breaks.

— Grant County

Make the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

Make Water Your Default Beverage

Water is the second most popular drink in the United States behind soft drinks. This is a scary statistic. You need to put those sugary drinks aside and make water your default beverage — the one you choose without even thinking about it. Here are ways to make water your go-to beverage.

Create a morning “water” ritual. Fill a water bottle and take it with you so you start your day drinking water. Wash the water bottle daily with soap and water and let it air dry. If you don’t have a sink handy at work, store the water bottle in a refrigerator at the end of the day so germs won’t grow overnight. Water bottles should be sanitized once a week with a solution of 1 teaspoon bleach in a quart of water.

Acquire a taste for water. The more often you choose water over other liquids, the better it will taste. Think of sweet beverages as “candy drinks” and enjoy them occasionally. Not all water tastes the same, so try water from different sources or at different temperatures. Add mint leaves or flavor your water with fruit for a refreshing taste.

Drink before you eat. Your mind doesn’t always know whether you are hungry or just need

a drink of water. Drinking a moderate amount of water before a meal or snack may suppress your appetite. In fact, studies show that water drinkers ate 75 to 90 fewer calories per meal.

Know signs of dehydration. Your body loses water every day. When the amount of water lost is greater than the amount of water you take in through drinking and eating, your body becomes out of balance — a condition called dehydration. Thirst is not the most reliable gauge of your body’s need for water. The color of your urine is a better indicator. Clear or light-colored urine is a sign you are well hydrated. Dark yellow or amber color is a sign of dehydration. Other signs include headaches, tiredness, dry mouth, dry skin, constipation, and feeling lightheaded.

Animals can also experience dehydration. When you walk your dog, take extra water along so your pet can have a drink, too. Excessive panting, slowed pace, sunken and dry eyes, and dry mouth, gums, and nose are signs your dog may be dehydrated.

Exercise Keeps Your Brain Sharp

Exercise is good for your heart and good for your brain, too. Your heart rate increases as you exercise, which pumps more oxygen to the brain. Aerobic exercise also helps repair damaged brain cells, and it has an antidepressant effect on your mind. Exercise also can enhance your memory.

The best workouts for brain health are those that require coordination, rhythm, and strategy, such as dancing. And, if you exercise first thing in the morning, you get a spike in brain activity that helps prepare you for mental stresses the rest of the day. If you are mentally exhausted at any time, take a walking break or do some jumping jacks to reboot your mind.

Enjoy a Great Catch

Do you eat seafood twice a week? The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendation is to eat 8 ounces of seafood a week because it contains a wide range of nutrients, especially healthy omega-3 fats, which help prevent heart disease.

There are many ways to enjoy seafood, and it is easy and quick to prepare. The main challenge is to avoid overcooking it. If you don't have much experience with seafood, try the "pouch cooking" method or this easy baked fish fillet. You can also be creative with grilled fish tacos, a shrimp stir fry, salmon patties, or by trying it with whole-wheat pasta.

Seafood doesn't have to be expensive either. Lower cost options include tilapia, whiting, canned tuna, and some frozen seafood.

Walk Kansas newsletters from previous years have featured seafood recipes and a variety of cooking methods. Here are links to a few you might enjoy:

Pouch Cooking, www.walkkansas.org/doc10921.ashx

Fish Tacos, www.walkkansas.org/doc5199.ashx

Spanish Style Cod, www.walkkansas.org/doc17023.ashx

Tuna Salad, www.walkkansas.org/doc15399.ashx

Salmon Burgers, www.walkkansas.org/doc13148.ashx

Salmon with Mediterranean Vegetables, www.walkkansas.org/doc13148.ashx

Easy Baked Fish Fillets

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients:

1 ½ pounds grouper, haddock, or cod fish

Cooking spray

1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

1 tablespoon light mayonnaise

⅛ teaspoon onion powder

⅛ teaspoon black pepper

⅓ cup breadcrumbs

1 tablespoon butter or stick margarine, melted

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Place fish in an 11- by 7-inch baking dish coated with cooking spray.
3. Combine lime juice, mayonnaise, onion powder, and pepper in small bowl. Spread mixture over fish. Sprinkle with breadcrumbs; drizzle with butter.
4. Bake at 425°F for 20 minutes or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Sprinkle with parsley before serving.

Nutrition information per serving:

230 calories; 6 g fat;
7 g carbohydrates;
34 g protein;
190 mg sodium.

Recipe adapted from
www.myrecipes.com

