

# The surprising truth about exercise

If sweaty gyms, perky aerobic instructors and memories of miserable P.E. classes have left you dreading the thought of exercising, you're in for a happy surprise. Here's the truth about exercise.

## **1. All movement counts.**

If you enjoy it, go ahead and spend hours sweating on the treadmill, stationary bicycle or elliptical machine; that's a fine way to improve the health of your cardiovascular system. But if you'd rather not, that's okay, too. The truth is all physical activity counts toward improving your health, from mopping the floor or raking the leaves to walking in place during TV commercials. Forget "no pain, no gain." The new rule: move your body more.

## **2. All movement adds up.**

Adults should engage in moderate-intensity physical activities for at least 30 minutes on five or more days of the week, according to recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American College of Sports Medicine. But here's the truth: that 30 minutes of physical activity doesn't have to be done all at once. Six 5-minute walks or three 10-minute walks are just as beneficial to your health as a single 30-minute walk.

## **3. It's like a magic potion for good health.**

Imagine an elixir that substantially reduced the risk of dying of coronary heart disease; decreased the risk for stroke, breast and colon cancers, diabetes and high blood pressure; helped to control weight; contributed to healthy bones, muscles and joints; reduced falls among older adults; helped to relieve the pain of arthritis; reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression; helped you sleep better at night; and is associated with fewer hospitalizations, physician visits and medications. Wouldn't you want a dose? The truth is it's real, and it's free. It's called exercise.

## **4. To lose a pound, the average person would have to walk 30 miles.**

Exercise is part of the weight loss equation — but only part. Though you can't burn off all the calories you eat through exercise, physical activity does slightly elevate your metabolism for a few hours afterward and can help build muscle tissue, two ways to burn more calories. It's also true that regular exercise is one of the best long-term indicators of successful weight maintenance.

## **5. It can be fun.**

You don't have to spend hours at the gym to realize the health benefits of physical activity. Think of the activities you enjoyed as a child, or would like to try now. Swimming, bike riding, roller blading, walking in the woods, walking in the mall, kicking a soccer ball, ice skating, playing ball with your kids, canoeing — the list of activities goes on and on. If it moves your body more, it counts, even if you enjoy it!