

New Year's Resolutions and Physical Activity

Every year when the calendar rolls over to a new year, many people make resolutions to change something about their life. Many of the top resolutions are get out of debt, take a trip, quit smoking and lose weight. Of course losing weight will be the topic of the article today. Losing weight is never easy and it is not usually accomplished by just changing one thing about your lifestyle, such as eating habits, exercise or TV habits. It takes a combination of change for all aspects of your lifestyle. You may need to change your diet to include more fruits, vegetables, or fiber along with doing new exercises or increasing the time and/or intensity spent being physically active. So, before you begin a weight loss program, see your primary health care provider for advice about your overall health risks and the weight loss options best for you. Health experts agree that the best and safest way for most adults to lose weight and improve their health is to modestly cut calories, eat a balanced diet, and be physically active each day.

Aerobic and Anaerobic Exercise

You may have heard these terms used interchangeably when it comes to exercise. So what is the difference between aerobic exercise and anaerobic exercise? The one word answer to that question is: oxygen. Let's take a look at what is meant by aerobic and anaerobic.

Aerobic exercise refers to exercise that involves or improves oxygen consumption by the body. Aerobic means "with oxygen", and refers to the use of oxygen in the body's metabolic or energy-generating process. Many types of exercise are aerobic, and by definition are performed at moderate levels of intensity for extended periods of time. To obtain the best results, an aerobic exercise session involves a warming up period, followed by at least 20 minutes of moderate to intense exercise involving large muscle groups, and a cooling down period at the end.

Anaerobic exercise is exercise intense enough to trigger anaerobic metabolism. It is used by athletes in non-endurance sports to build power and by body builders to build muscle mass. Muscles trained under anaerobic conditions develop differently, leading to greater performance in short duration, high intensity activities, which last up to about 2 minutes.

Aerobic exercise and fitness can be contrasted with anaerobic exercise, of which strength training and weight training are the most prominent examples. The two types of exercise differ by the duration and intensity of muscular contractions involved, as well as by how energy is generated within the muscle. Initially during aerobic exercise, glycogen is broken down to produce glucose, which is then broken down using oxygen to generate energy. In the absence of these carbohydrates, fat metabolism is initiated instead. The latter is a slow process, and is accompanied by a decline in performance level. Such activities like walking, running, swimming, and cycling require a great deal of oxygen to generate the energy needed for prolonged exercise. Anaerobic exercise, in contrast, refers to the initial phase of exercise, or to any short burst of intense exertion, in which the glycogen or sugar is consumed without oxygen, and is a far less efficient process. Weight lifting and sprints are some of the most common forms of anaerobic exercise, but you have the opportunity to do anaerobic exercise often during the day. Walking up a flight of stairs and carrying groceries are considered anaerobic exercise.

You may have started walking, or maybe you want to do some other form of exercise; no matter what you choose let's go over some beginning tips. Start off slowly and build up gradually, many people start off at a frenzied pace (working out too long or too intensely) and become sore and injured. Listen to your body. If you feel pain or shortness of breath take a break, you may be pushing your body too hard. Consider your fitness goal: is it to lose weight, feel better, or build muscle? Consider activities you enjoy, if you enjoy it the more likely you will continue. You might include someone to exercise with you; some things are more enjoyable to do together. Finally, allow your body to recover, because if you injure yourself it will dampen and discourage your spirit. These are just a few tips to get started.

From the Nurse's Desk:

Nurse Amanda: High blood pressure (hypertension) is becoming a problem for our children here in the United States. It is very important to identify, as well as, treat high blood pressure and prehypertension. Families as a whole need to identify the risk of prehypertension and hypertension and modify their lifestyles all together as most children follow parents and older sibling examples, so it is very important for everyone in the family get involved. If you know your child has a problem with weight or has a history of elevated blood pressure, keep a record. Check your child's blood pressure at home or let the school nurse keep a record for you, and if it stays elevated you should consult your physician before potential complications occur. Diet and exercise are very important to maintain a healthy lifestyle all together. It is also important to let your school nurse know if you have any medical problems including hypertension, so make sure you keep your medical emergency cards up to date and let your school nurse know if have any changes in your health including changes in medication.

Next Month:

We will talk about continuing an exercise program, warming up, how often and how long a person should exercise, and cooling down. Until then, keep up the efforts for a healthier you.