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Exercise: Too Little, Too Much - Just Right!

Stats Can's Canadian Health Measures Survey looked at the body composition and fitness of 5,600 Canadians from age 6 to 79 years at 15 sites across the country. During the study period from 2007 to 2009, the survey determined that just under 38 percent of adults were at a healthy weight, about 1 percent were underweight, 37 percent were overweight and 24 percent were obese. Needless to say, understanding how to get and stay fit is important to all of us.

Change the Impact of Your DNA!

While your DNA can't be changed, you can change the way it works! A study in Sweden has found that engaging in moderate exercise actually affects the way your genes express themselves, changing the way fats are stored and used, as well as positively influencing the risk of obesity and diabetes. It is believed that this may be the mechanism by which exercise reduces the risk of several conditions.

Moderate Exercise Works

To be beneficial, exercise doesn't have to be a gruelling 1-2 hours at the gym. Moderate exercise, defined as equivalent to brisk walking (3 mph), does not have to be done all at once. As long as the recommended minimum of 30 minutes, 5 days/week is being met - even in 5-10 minutes intervals - you can reap the health rewards. Of course, you can always do a little more for optimal health benefits!

Too Much Exercise?

Researchers have found that it is possible to exercise too much! The risks of inactivity are well-known but now there's news that exercising for more than an hour a day can actually increase the chance of developing atrial fibrillation or coronary heart disease. The risks aren't as bad as those of inactivity, but do suggest that there is an ideal amount of daily activity - somewhere between 30-60 minutes per day most days of the week.

Active Video Games

Video games have a bad reputation for contributing to inactivity and the risks of obesity, diabetes and other chronic conditions. But, a recent study has demonstrated that some video games - specifically the active games such as Kinect - can actually meet the basic criteria for moderate to vigorous activity and contribute to improvements in strength, endurance, agility and body composition. Pass the remote!

Many people believe that exercise is the holy grail of medicine - and there may be a nugget of truth in that. But, as with any treatment, there can be a downside or too much of a good thing. Talk to your physician before you start.