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Fitness and Heart Health

In Canada, someone dies every seven minutes from cardiovascular disease: heart attack or stroke according to the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada. Several cardiovascular disease prediction “tools” exist (Framingham is probably the most famous one), but now a new one has been developed which incorporates fitness level. Your fitness (or lack of it) has been determined to be a powerful predictor of your risk of developing cardiovascular disease, along with cholesterol/triglycerides, blood glucose/diabetes, blood pressure, body-mass index (BMI), smoking status, age and personal history.

Finding Time for Fitness

One of the biggest obstacles to exercise is finding time, but research is finding that it only takes a little bit of exercise to reap big benefits. Investigators found that as little as 10 minutes of running per day, even at low intensity, resulted in a significant reduction in all-cause mortality – including cardiovascular disease. Better results were associated with the standard 30-40 minute/day recommendation, but this is proof that even a little is better than nothing!

Group Walking is a Fun Form of Fitness

A pair of PhD students in the UK has performed a systematic review of all the literature pertaining to walking groups and the findings are gratifying. Participants experienced reductions in blood pressure, resting heart rate, cholesterol and body fat. And, while there weren't significant improvements to fasting blood glucose or waist circumference, walkers enjoyed improved endurance and fitness and less depression. And, it's just plain more fun than walking alone!

Ditch the Car – Be Fitter

Want a simple suggestion for improving fitness? Ditch the car! Those who use “active” transportation, such as walking or cycling to work/school – even if combined with using public transportation – lower their body-mass index (BMI) and body fat composition and reduce their risk of high blood pressure and diabetes. Certainly by the time you factor-in the environmental benefits, active commuting is a win-win idea!

Walk-on down to your pharmacy to talk to your pharmacist about steps you can take to improve your health with exercise – cause even a little bit of effort is going to go a long way!