

BETTER HEALTH

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Did You Know

Exercising when you're younger can keep your bones stronger when you're older. Although everyone loses some bone mass as they age, being physically active as a young adult can fortify your bones making them stronger throughout your life. This makes you less prone to broken bones and diseases like osteoporosis when you're older.

Source: *Medical News Today*

Mental Health Tip

Research finds that people experience more psychological stress and higher heart rates when they hold grudges than when they grant forgiveness.

Source: *health.com*

Walk with Pep in Your Step

Walking at a brisk pace can lessen your chance of developing type 2 diabetes compared to slower walking. A study published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* found that a strolling pace typically registers under 2 mph. Bumping up the pace to a walking speed between 2 to 3 mph could mean a 15% lower risk of type 2 diabetes, regardless of the amount of time you spent walking. Walking 3 mph or more puts you on track for even greater potential type 2 diabetes protection. The study found that every 0.6 mph increase was associated with a 9% risk reduction.

To help measure your pace, use a fitness tracker (such as pedometer): A walking speed of 2.5 mph is equivalent to 87 steps per minute for men and 100 steps per minute for women.



Another way to measure is how quickly you can walk a mile:

- Walk a mile in 30 minutes, and your pace is roughly 2 mph.
- Walk a mile in 24 minutes, and your pace is 2.5 mph.
- Walk a mile in 20 minutes, and your pace is 3 mph.

Whatever your current pace is now, start slowly to increase it over time. Trying to go too fast too soon – especially if you don't regularly walk – could do more harm than good, leaving you injured and frustrated. What's most important is to get into a routine of walking. Walk at a pace that feels comfortable. Once you're in a routine, then start increasing both the distance and the pace. As always, consult your physician before starting a new exercise program or increasing the intensity of your workout.

Source: *Everyday Health and Prevention*



Create Your Own Zone

Following the examples of people living in “Blue Zones,” you can make wherever you live a healthier place. “Blue Zones” are regions where people have the longest lifespans and healthspans (the period of time in your life that you are healthy).

People in these regions have lifestyle habits that align with decades of medical research and are attributed to residents living healthier and longer. Incorporating some of the following Blue Zone health habits could lead you to being more physically and mentally able to serve God and others.

Blue Zone people eat more plants. The more plant-based your diet, the bigger the impact on lowering your cholesterol and blood pressure which can reduce your risk of heart disease. Start slowly by adding vegetables as side dishes and use fruits as your dessert.

Blue Zone people pay attention to being hungry and being full cues. Be mindful of your body’s cues when you eat. For example, it takes roughly 20 minutes, from the time you start eating, for your stomach to send signals to your brain that you’re full. Eat slowly, drink water between bites, be aware of how much you’ve already eaten, and stop eating when you are 80% full.

Active members of the Concordia Health Plan (along with spouses and covered dependents) can learn mindful eating and snacking skills by enrolling in the free Wondr Health program. You’ll also learn to read your body’s signals if you’re hungry or if it’s simply your body telling you to drink more water. To get enrolled in the next class, go to ConcordiaPlans.org and click on the “Members” box, “Physical Wellness” card, and then “Weight Management.”

Blue Zone people have long-lasting social connections. Social relationships have a positive influence on your health, and growing evidence shows that loneliness can have a negative influence on how you age. Plan frequent get-togethers with family. If they live far away, stay in touch through phone calls, emails, Facebook, etc. Being involved with your church also creates a strong sense of community and belonging.

Blue Zone people prioritize movement. Make walking a part of your daily routine – even if it’s just for 15 minutes most days of the week. Find ways to add extra movement into your days by taking the stairs and parking further away from entrances to work, church, and stores.

Blue Zone people know how to cope with stress. When stress goes untreated, it can cause serious implications both mentally and physically. If you’re an active member of the Concordia Health Plan dealing with constant, chronic stress, check out the resources available to you at ConcordiaPlans.org. Click on the “Members” box and then click on the “Mental Health” card.

Source: National Institutes of Health

Don’t Deprive Your Body of Vitamin D

All vitamins are essential for your body, but many health experts put vitamin D as one of the top three essentials (along with B12 and iron).

Part of Vitamin D’s high ranking is due to its main function which is helping your body absorb calcium from the intestines to maintain bone strength. That calcium is necessary to reduce the risk of bone loss or soft bones. The other functions of vitamin D are to support your immune system; regulate blood sugar levels; and aid your muscles and nerves.

The good news is that God created your body to make its own vitamin D. Known as the “sunshine vitamin,” sun exposure each day helps your body make vitamin D – but sunshine shouldn’t be your only source. Three other sources to help increase daily vitamin D include:

- Foods naturally rich in vitamin D such as salmon, tuna, and egg yolks.
- Vitamin D fortified foods such as dairy and non-dairy milk, orange juice and some breakfast cereals.
- Supplements in both pill and liquid form. (Supplements are generally recommended for people with fat absorption issues, lactose intolerance, milk allergies, as well as for people with darker skin tones or with certain medical conditions that prevent them from going outdoors.) Talk to your doctor before taking supplements as too much vitamin D can also harm your health.

Source: Yale Medicine





Being Physically Active Can Make Up for Sitting

We've all heard about the health consequences of sitting for long periods of time such as:

- Weakening your leg and gluteal muscles.
- Causing your hip flexor muscles to shorten, leading to hip problems.
- Increasing your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- Escalating your risk of suffering a heart attack and stroke.

The good news is that a little exercise can offset the damages of prolonged sitting. A study published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* showed that just 20-25 minutes a day of physical activity helped to offset a sedentary lifestyle.

The study involved 12,000 people (aged 50+ years) who wore movement detection sensors for at least two years. The researchers found that those who sat for more than 12 hours a day had a 38% higher risk for an early death than those who sat for eight hours – but only if they also had less than the recommended 20-25 minutes a day of exercise. The more active a participant was, the more the risk declined.

The study was observational, so the data could not show cause and effect, but researchers concluded that even small amounts of physical activity may be an effective strategy to lessen the mortality risk due to being sedentary.

Source: *U.S. News, and Medical News Today*

Food for Thought

Magnesium-rich foods can help with your mental health. According to several small studies, magnesium can reduce anxiety by improving brain function. Foods high in magnesium include leafy greens, nuts, whole grains, seeds, cacao, bananas, avocado, and sweet potatoes.

Source: *Health*

Be Wary of Health Claims

In the quest to stay healthy, ward off diseases, or simply be healthier, we may be swayed by the latest health trends. Be wary of trends that promise a magic bullet but produce no actual health benefits.

The CLAIM – Mushroom infused coffee helps with inflammation, immunity, stress relief, and better sleep.

The TRUTH – The main benefit of drinking mushroom coffee is that you will decrease the amount of caffeine due to fewer coffee beans. Drinking fewer grams of caffeine may help you sleep better, but the other claims have yet to be proven.

Slightly cooked or raw mushrooms by themselves do support the immune system, reduce stress, and provide protein and fiber, but once mushrooms are dried, extracted and brewed for coffee, much of the nutritional benefits are lost.

The CLAIM – Taking fish oil supplements is beneficial for cardiovascular health.

The TRUTH – Large, randomized trials have shown that fish oil supplements do not prevent heart disease.

According to Connie Diekman, a food and nutrition consultant and former president for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, consuming seafood does provide a health benefit, but it hasn't been proven that oil from fish is the reason why. Instead, it may be "the synergistic effect of everything in that food, as opposed to a single nutrient," said Diekman.

Sources: *Philadelphia Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and JAMA Cardiology*

Money Matters

Playing the "I deserve this" card can capsize your budget. You use that card as a way to justify an impulse buy or a big-ticket purchase. You may try to convince yourself that because you work really hard, you therefore deserve something – you've earned it. The problem with rationalizing is that you start to blur the line between want and need.

You may want a new car, but not if you can't afford it. Even if you could afford a new car, that doesn't necessarily mean you should get one. If your car is still running, try to use it for as long as you can and use the money saved to build up your emergency fund, pay off a debt, or start a "next-car fund."

The lure to buy new things is tempting. If, however, that's more of a want than a need, resist the urge to buy no matter how hard you work or how strongly you feel that you deserve it.



Editor's Pulse *by Steve Gruenwald*

And That's the Way It Is

The saying "No news is good news" can be interpreted two ways. It could mean that if you don't hear anything, well, then that's good. If you regularly watch news programs, you could interpret that saying more cynically by stating: there is no good news. It's all bad.

The world's reaction to bad news is almost always the same: "Why?" "Why would someone do that?" That's the wrong question. The question is not "Why," but "Why not?" To ask "why?" assumes that good people are doing bad things when we know that as a result of sin, we're all doing what comes naturally. We were born and will die as sinful human beings. We should be surprised that anything good ever happens at all!

The very thought that no good could come from us would be incredibly bad news if it weren't for God's love and grace. He knew how incapable we were to achieve anything good on our own because of our sin. Christ's death on the cross forgives our sins and gives us hope for today to lead more Christ-like lives and gives to us the promise of eternal life for tomorrow.

Even while we celebrate the Good News of the Gospel, the reality is the bad news/good news cycle continues throughout our lifetime as we live as both sinner and saint.

It's understandable that by worldly standards Christians are often viewed as hypocrites. We're "supposed to be good," yet we still sin. What is sometimes confusing is when Christians ask "Why" of other Christians who sin. "He should have known better" (we all do, but sin anyway). "She let us down (we've all let others down, but maybe to a lesser degree). We're not excusing the sin, but let's at least pray for the resolve to show some compassion and grace for the sinner and the family – especially for those that are brothers and sisters in Christ. It's during moments of being brought low that they are in need the most for prayers and support from their family of believers.

Because of God's love for us, we strive with His help to love and forgive those who have fallen and could use our support. That's not an easy task. For those inner-battles, we pray for the strength to be more Christ-like: to recognize that we all are in need a savior. Then when we fail – whether it's not reaching out to fellow sinners to support them, or when we are needing that support ourselves – we know that God will never forsake us or abandon us.

What do you know, the Good News really is good!



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