

Inactivity is Toxic

You do Not Have to be Fat or Sick

Lounging in front of the tube not only eats up hours in your day, it may also shorten your life, according to a new study.

The study, which looked at the connection between [watching TV](#) and death for 8,800 Australian adults found that each hour of TV-viewing was associated with an 11 percent increased risk of death from any cause, and an 18 percent increased risk of death from cardiovascular disease. These findings held true even after the researchers took into account other factors that could raise the risk of dying, such as age, gender, waist circumference and exercise habits.

The science is absolute. The more you sit, the more you get sick and fat. And more you get on your feet and move, the quicker you regain your health and vitality.

Activity Defined

When you talk about “activity” most people think about exercise such as cardio, weight training, and movements like yoga. My definition of activity is a lot broader. I call “activity” any process that challenges the mind or body. Exercise is one of the most important activities but other forms of moving are also important. In addition, demanding or stimulating situations such puzzles and brain teasers for the mind, build cognitive capacity. . Stimulating muscles encourages muscle growth. We now know that stimulation of the brain causes the development of new neurons and connections.

Activity is probably one of the few things that doctors, trainers, therapists, and scientists agree is helpful to everyone no matter how old or young or where your health or weight is now. Most will tell you “it is never too late”. If you think of activity “as medicine”, you are sure to wonder if there are side effects like prescription medicines. I am amazed to see a full page advertisement in a national magazine for a prescription drug, only to find the next two to three pages explaining the negative side effects. Activity has its own list of side effects, but unlike drugs, almost all the side effects are **positive** and life affirming. Let’s take walking for example and let me list just some of the side effects: Burns lots of calories, reduces blood sugar swings, reases back pain, slims your waist, lowers blood pressure, reduces the level of bad cholesterol, reduces heart attack risk, enhances stamina and energy, lessens anxiety and tension, improves muscle tone, easy on your joints, reduces appetite, increases aerobic capacity, can be done in short bouts, slows down osteoporosis bone loss and can be done when you’re traveling.

In addition to walking there are lots of activities you can add to your daily life that will move you into the life style of an active, happy, healthy and engaged person.

Here are just some ideas for adding activity to your life

Walk faster	Learn to fidget
Take the stairs	Park in the far corner of the lot
Add 15 minutes of walking to lunch menu	Dance and sing like no one is watching
Do squats when picking things up	Neaten up daily
Scrub you floors on hands and knees	Do arm workouts with a can in each hand while watching TV
Put your drinking water in a gallon jug, put in the refrigerator, pour out of this eight pound jug for added exercise	Exercise your calf muscles while brushing your teeth
Stretch during morning shower	Do brain puzzles and quizzes
Write your story	Research a new subject

If you are ready to start walking there is some housekeeping work to do first.

If you have a pair of walking or tennis shoes you may have what you need as soon as you get a good pair of insoles. You need good arch supports and heel strike to soften the blow to the heel.

The next thing is a pedometer to count your steps. You can get them for \$5.00 at Walmart or if you have a smart phone download them for free. Don't buy more expensive ones, you only want to count steps. Put it on your belt or waistband first thing in the morning and wear it all day everywhere you go (not just the walk) since all steps count.

You will need a blood pressure meter if you don't already have one. If you are wondering why a blood pressure meter is important ask yourself "What is the first thing they take when you go to your doctor".

Next, stop into the sewing store and get a measuring tape. You are going to measure your tummy at the belly button (stay away from the scale except once a month). When measuring, go around your trunk at the belly button and measure while sucking it in as hard as you can. We want to measure fat, not weak belly muscles. Record belly fat about once a week.

You will need a "Personal Health Journal" to record your health indicators. This is something you will measure and record everyday for the rest of your life. It is important to and record the measurements each day and your belly measurement about once a week. You are looking for the trends, not just today's numbers.

First thing in the morning record your blood pressure, heart rate, blood sugar, steps yesterday and belly size (measured at the belly button) in your "Personal Health Journal". You can get it and all the other items you need for your weight loss/health improvement program at: www.activityismedicine.com. Once you have recorded your numbers this is a good time to reset your pedometer to count today's activity.

Now that you are ready to go walking, call a friend and hit the trail. Remember to bring your cell phone for safety. Start slow and build your activity as your body gets use to it. Start with whatever you are comfortable with and go a little further each day. First, set your goal to go walking three days a week and increase you steps taken slightly each day. The second week, up

your goal to 4 days a week and increased steps. Keep your goal at 4 days a week for the third week but slightly increase steps. At the fourth week, you may hit a wall because to go from 4 days a week to 5 days is huge. To walk consistently for four weeks means your brain is changing its wiring and walking and activity is becoming the norm.

You will find yourself getting stronger and your health improving. Don't expect it to happen all at once. You will be surprised on a day you never expected to realize that things are improving, you're happier, the sun is a little brighter, colors stronger and other things happening. Tell your friends and family and get them to go walking with you.