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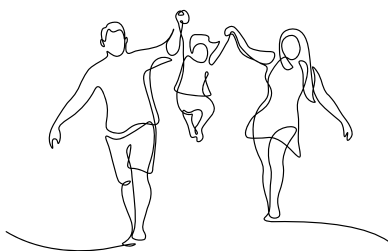
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Walk Kansas 2023: March 26 – May 20



Sleep and Your Brain

Restful, restorative sleep is vital to your overall health. It affects every type of tissue and system in the body including your brain, heart, and lungs, as well as your metabolism, immune function, mood, and disease resistance. Sleep allows your brain and body to slow down and engage in the process of recovery and renewal. Adults need seven to nine hours of sleep, and children and teens need even more. Here are tips to help you improve your sleep habits.

Establish a sleep routine. Go to bed and get up around the same times each day. Prepare for a good night's sleep with activities that help you relax and avoid exposing your eyes to computer or phone screens.

Check your sleep environment. The best is a room that is dark, quiet, cool, and comfortable. Don't let pets or phones disturb your sleep and don't watch TV, read, or work in your bedroom.

Don't drink alcohol near bedtime. It may help you fall asleep quicker, but it reduces rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, the stage of sleep when you dream. REM sleep happens about 90 minutes after you fall asleep and is restorative.

Avoid heavy or spicy meals three hours before bedtime and caffeine at least five hours before bedtime.

Exercise can improve your ability to sleep so get some activity during the day.

Pay attention to cues from your body. If you feel very sleepy earlier than usual, go to bed. Your body may be fighting off an infection or needing more time to recover from high mental or physical demands.

Adequate sleep and quality of sleep are as essential to survival as food and water. Without proper sleep, your brain can't form or maintain the pathways that let you learn and create new memories, plus it is more difficult to concentrate and respond quickly. Sleep is a complex and dynamic process that impacts how you function in so many ways. Sleeping seven to nine hours each day is time well spent.

How Long Does It Take to Lose Fitness?

You did it! Congratulations on completing this 8-week health initiative. If you have been walking, or doing some other type of aerobic activity, and adding strengthening and/or stretching exercises at least twice a week, you probably have noticed that many of your daily activities are easier, that you have more stamina and endurance, and you feel stronger.

So, what happens if you hit the “pause” button on your daily activity? It depends. Most participants in this program likely fall into the category of a recreational exerciser and it would take 2 to 4 weeks of inactivity before you see real change in your fitness level.

If you stop exercising, the first change you will notice is a decline in your aerobic fitness. You’ll notice that you get out of breath more quickly when climbing stairs or walking longer distances. While cardio conditioning falls faster than strength, it is easier to regain. It is also important to remember that taking time off from exercise occasionally can be a good thing, and a good exercise routine includes rest days.

The effect of inactivity on your muscle strength and endurance will be slight during the first few weeks. After that, your muscles will not feel as firm and you will notice a decline in muscle strength. The effect inactivity has on your waistline is based on input and output. When you exercise, you burn more calories. If you stop being active, you will need to reduce calories to avoid weight gain.

Other factors play a role in how quickly you lose health benefits after you stop exercising. When comparing adults who were either 20 to 30 years old or 65 to 75 years old, the older adults lost fitness gains almost twice as fast as the younger set. The good news is that if you have fallen out of your routine, you can regain fitness and health benefits simply by being active again.

The Walk Kansas program is designed to be a catalyst for change – to nudge you to be more active for at least 8 weeks. Hopefully, you have experienced how much better you feel when you are more active every day. This feeling of improved health is called “intrinsic” motivation. Because you feel better, you are motivated to continue a more active lifestyle. Your motivation to be active is internal (how you feel) rather than external (motivated by prizes or things). Internal motivation is much more powerful, and the lifestyle changes you make, as a result, will last longer.



Tips for Great Grilling

Memorial Day weekend marks the start of grilling season for many of us. While meat and poultry are popular choices for grilling, the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) reminds us that cooking these foods with intense heat can lead to formation of potential carcinogens. Heterocyclic amines (HCAs) form in meat when its proteins react to the intense heat of the grill. Studies have linked HCAs to development of cancer.

You can modify your grilling technique to reduce the chance of cancer risk. Marinating meat before grilling can decrease formation of HCAs. If you are grilling larger cuts of meat, pre-cook them partially to reduce the time meat is exposed to flame. Trim the fat from meat to reduce flare-ups and charring. Cut meat into smaller portions and mix with vegetables to shorten the cooking time. Another way to minimize cancer risk – grill more veggies!

Grilled vegetables and fruits are delicious, and they are key elements in a healthful diet. The bonus is they don’t form HCAs when cooked, so that cancer risk is eliminated. As you plan cookout meals this summer, include plenty of colorful grilled vegetables and fruits like asparagus, all types of peppers, squash, broccoli, tomatoes, onions, carrots, corn, mushrooms, eggplant, potatoes, mangoes, and pineapple. Try something new, like grilled lettuce!

Here are basic instructions for grilling veggies and fruit:

- » Slice veggies the same thickness so they cook at the same rate.
- » Drizzle or brush with olive oil before cooking.

- » Season simply with a sprinkle of salt, pepper, and any dried herbs you like.
- » Grill over medium heat to start. To prevent veggies and fruit from slipping through the grates, lay them crosswise or use a grill basket.
- » Close the lid to create the same environment as an oven. Flip halfway through cooking time. More dense vegetables, like peppers and onions, will cook in about 8 to 10 minutes. Squash, eggplant, and asparagus will only require 5 to 7 minutes.
- » After removing vegetables and fruit from heat, you can add a splash of balsamic vinegar (flavored varieties add interest) and fresh herbs. Before adding herbs, you may need to add just a bit of olive oil.

One way to add flavor to meals from the grill is with a salsa side. There are so many combinations of fruits, vegetables, herbs, and seasonings to enjoy! So, don't think of salsa as just a dip with chips. Almost anything savory, salty, meaty, fresh, or slightly sweet is even better with salsa on top: chicken, fish, steak, pork, lamb, or a baked potato. Top a salad with salsa and sliced chicken, boiled eggs, or tuna and you have a winning meal, especially in the heat of summer.

Moving Forward

How can you carry forward the positive lifestyle changes you've made during the past 8 weeks? Keeping a log of physical activity minutes/steps is a great way. Schedule time for activity on your calendar, pair up with a walking buddy to keep you accountable, and try new activities so you don't get bored. The best activity is the one you will actually do!

Walk Kansas 2023 will focus on adding strengthening and stretching exercises, and these won't require special equipment or a trip to a gym. We hope you will join us again for Walk Kansas 2023!

Like us on Facebook: [Kansas State University Walk Kansas](#)

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Five Fruit Salsa

Makes 8 Servings

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cantaloupe, chopped
- 3 green onions, chopped
- 1 kiwi fruit, peeled and finely chopped
- ½ medium navel orange (or 1 tangerine or clementine), peeled and finely chopped
- ½ medium yellow pepper, chopped
- ½ medium red pepper, chopped
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped
- ½ cup fresh or canned pineapple, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- ½ cup strawberries, chopped
- Salt, to taste

Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Scrub cantaloupe, kiwi fruit, orange, and lime with a clean produce brush under cool running water. Rinse onions and peppers by gently rubbing under cold running water. Prepare fresh pineapple, if using. Wash pineapple; peel and remove eyes and tough fiber.
3. Chop fruits and vegetables as recommended.
4. In a large bowl, combine the cantaloupe, onion, kiwi, orange, peppers, and pineapple. Cover and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight.
5. Drain salsa just before serving and add lime juice and strawberries.

If you serve this as a traditional salsa, with chips, you may not need to add salt to the recipe. If you serve this as a side for fish, chicken, or other meat, add salt to taste. This salsa also adds a punch of flavor to fish and chicken tacos.

Nutrition Information per 1/2 cup serving: 30 calories; 0 g fat (0 g saturated fat); 8 g carbohydrates; 1 g protein; 1 g fiber; 75 mg sodium; 5 g sugar.

