

## **"Why is Exercise Important?"**

Have you ever heard the expression "use it or lose it"? It's true! If you don't use your body, you will surely lose it. Your muscles will become flabby and weak. Your heart and lungs won't function efficiently. And your joints will be stiff and easily injured. Inactivity is as much of a health risk as smoking!

### **Helps Prevent Diseases**

Our bodies were meant to move -- they actually crave exercise. Regular exercise is necessary for physical fitness and good health. It reduces the risk of heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes and other diseases. It can improve your appearance and delay the aging process.

### **Improves Stamina**

When you exercise, your body uses energy to keep going. Aerobic exercise involves continuous and rhythmic physical motion, such as walking and bicycling. It improves your stamina by training your body to become more efficient and use less energy for the same amount of work. As your conditioning level improves, your heart rate and breathing

rate return to resting levels much sooner from strenuous activity.

### **Strengthens and Tones**

Exercising with weights and other forms of resistance training develops your muscles, bones and ligaments for increased strength and endurance. Your posture can be improved, and your muscles become more firm and toned. You not only feel better, but you look better, too!

### **Enhances Flexibility**

Stretching exercises are also important for good posture. They keep your body limber so that you can bend, reach and twist. Improving your flexibility through exercise reduces the chance of injury and improves balance and coordination. If you have stiff, tense areas, such as the upper back or neck, performing specific stretches can help "loosen" those muscles, helping you feel more relaxed.

## **Controls Weight**

Exercise is also a key to weight control because it burns calories. If you burn off more calories than you take in, you lose weight. It's as simple as that.

## **Improves Quality of Life**

Once you begin to exercise regularly, you will discover many more reasons why exercise is so important to improving the quality of your life. Exercise reduces stress, lifts moods, and helps you sleep better. It can keep you looking and feeling younger throughout your entire life.

## **How Often Should I Exercise?**

The benefits of any exercise program will diminish if it's disrupted too frequently. A "stop-start" routine is not only ineffective, but can cause injuries. Being consistent with exercise, therefore, is probably the most important factor in achieving desired results.

People often assume that more is better. Wrong! Doing too much too soon or performing intense exercises on a daily

basis will have deleterious effects, such as muscle/tendon strains, loss of lean tissue, and fitness-level plateaus.

If you are a beginner, start off slower than you think you should. Three days per week is realistic, safe and effective. If you are experienced, do cardiovascular (aerobic) exercises such as walking, jogging and bicycling for no more than 200 minutes per week with no more than 60 minutes per session.

Weight training should be done no more than three times per week targeting the same muscle groups. Exercise the same muscle groups on non-consecutive days because muscles need adequate time to recover and cannot be effectively trained if they are tired or sore.

Many people forget to stretch or make the excuse that they don't have the time. Flexibility is important, so make the time! Stretching can be done every day, but stick to a minimum of three times per week in order to reap the benefits. When the body is warmed up, such as after a workout session, perform five to 10 stretches that target the major muscle groups. Hold each stretch for 10-30 seconds