

Inactive lifestyle can be fatal

Exercise must fit into our daily routine

By LAURIE BURNS

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Pet owners know that the best way to kill a healthy puppy or kitten is to stuff it with food and keep it inactive.

Humans are not any different. A diet high in fat combined with an inactive lifestyle is also fatal.

Primitive man survived largely through his physical exertions. He hunted animals and he fought other man.

He and his wife labored in the fields or gathered food in the woods and lifted water, almost constantly

they were in physical action.

The human body that evolved out of this primitive lifestyle still remains with us in essential outline, but our motivations for physical effort have vanished.

Modern man survives largely by his mental efforts, his wits and skills, and these skills are usually done now sitting down. The need to combine man's past vigour and active lifestyle with our present medical advances would be ideal.

Labor saving devices have certainly done some social good but, maybe we have too much of a good thing. Technological advances have

left us free of physical stress and movement. Physical activities once prevalent in daily life have almost vanished, such as walking to school or work, climbing stairs, carrying coal, water or food supplies, chopping wood, picking berries, hand-washing clothes. Now we can have all these things done by automation.

Progress! Now we need to learn to fit exercise into our daily routine, individuals must purposely plan when and what activity they are going to do.

People need to understand that our bodies were designed for physical stress and that we need physical

activity for good health and mental equilibrium.

1. Get on the road to improved physical fitness now, it is never too late to start.

2. If you are over 40, you should check with your family physician to ensure that you have no unknown physical restrictions.

3. Choose an activity that you like. Your activity should be enjoyable or you will not stick with it.

4. Start out slow, if you are very sore the next day, you have over done it.

5. Listen to your body it will tell you how much you can do.



HEALTH NOTES

So you had a long day...and you ended that day with your favourite cocktail or possibly a glass of wine with dinner. That's o.k. isn't it?

Isn't a healthy lifestyle all about moderation? The question is what is moderation? And, when is someone at risk for an alcohol related problem?

Did you know that the number of standard drinks a person usually has per week can be used to indicate potential risk for an alcohol related problem? A standard drink could be 1 1/2 oz of spirit, 5 oz of wine, or 12 oz of regular beer. The following is a list of risk categories.

No risk: no alcohol consumed. Low risk: 1 - 12 drinks per week. Moderate risk: 13 - 34 drinks per week. High risk: 34 or more drinks per week.

The total number of drinks per week should be spread out over that week and not consumed on one occasion. It is recommended that men have no more than four drinks at one time and women have no more than three.

As people consume more alcohol on a regular basis, moving higher up the risk continuum, the probability of developing a variety of alcohol related problems increases. These include: strained social relations, not only for the drinker but also for the drinker's family and the community in general; alcohol dependence; legal difficulties; and, acute and chronic health problems.

The inappropriate use of alcohol is linked to premature death. About 2 per cent of deaths in Ontario are thought to be directly attributable to alcohol and as many as 11 per cent may be alcohol related. Heavy drinkers (35 or more drinks per week) have approximately five times the rate of health problems than the general population and twice the overall premature death rate of people of the same age and gender. Heavy alcohol use is associated with: liver disease, some cancers (e.g. stomach, upper digestive), high blood pressure, stroke and heart disease.

Alcohol is estimated to be a major contributing factor in: 30-40 per cent of deaths due to falls, fires and drowning; 10 per cent of cancer deaths; 5 per cent of deaths due to heart disease and stroke; and 40.6 per cent of motor-vehicle accidents where the driver was killed.

Information collected that is specific to Halton indicates that 79 per cent of Halton residents drink alcohol and that 9.1 per cent of adults 20 years and over consume more than two drinks per day. Ninety per cent of males and females aged 20-44, and 85 per cent aged 45-64 believe that it is unlikely they will have a problem with alcohol in the future.

Here are a few ideas to encourage sensible drinking.

Keep track - How much are you drinking? Stay Alert - There will be time when the pressure to drink will be strong. Learn to: resist temptation, refuse drinks without feeling guilty or antisocial. Don't use alcohol to cope - Express anger, express your opinion, express affection, assert yourself. Pace yourself - Measure your drinks; dilute them; alternate drinks with soft drinks; have a snack with your drink; have no more than one drink per hour. Spend time doing other things - Go for a walk, see a movie, read a book, learn a new skill, call a friend.

For more information contact the Halton Regional Health Department, Health Promotion Program at 825-6060.

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