

SPECIAL DIABETES FIGHT BACK FEATURE

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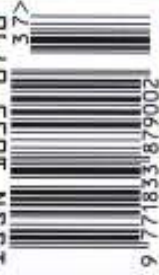
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higher risk of all-cause and cardiovascular mortality than obese men who were physically fit. Increased longevity was also found in men who were fit with larger waist girths than for unfit men with smaller waistlines. A similar life-preserving benefit has been shown for women, with those achieving higher fitness levels (above the 85th percentile for their age) having a 50 per cent lower mortality rate than less fit women. Even for people with health risk factors including high blood pressure, cholesterol and those who smoked, having a high level of fitness provided protection against the influence of these factors on premature mortality.

Being physically fit is as important, if not more, in determining long term health, as other established risk factors including excess body weight. So next time you're having a health check, instead of just focusing on the scales, consider an assessment of your physical activity and fitness level.

It is not even necessary to lose weight, to benefit from the effects of exercise on a number of health markers. Even a single exercise session has positive effects on our blood sugar levels, metabolic rate and sense of well-being. Regular moderate intensity exercise brings about even greater health benefits as the body adapts and improves its efficiency. Changes in body composition (increased muscle tissue, less body fat), blood pressure, cholesterol levels and a more efficient cardiovascular system, all reduce the risk of chronic illness and ensure we continue to manage and enjoy our daily activities.

Re-focus your exercise goals

The next step is putting this news into practice and making changes to the way you evaluate your progress with exercise. Shifting your short term focus from the scales to health outcomes and personal goals will help. Check your

Exercising for **health**: focus on your fitness, not the scales

Did you know that exercise alone can improve your health and reduce your risk of disease, even if the exercise program doesn't lead to weight loss? This fact surely challenges the thoughts of many people as they look in despair at the scales to evaluate their exercise efforts. Exercise is much more than an energy burner and weight loss strategy. Exercise has a whole-body effect and its benefits are widespread including for the heart, blood vessels, muscles, bones, joints and even our mood. Exercise is one of the only medications which impacts on multiple health risk factors simultaneously, with few side effects, and is readily available to us all.

Several large studies have shown that people with higher body weight and larger waistlines can obtain the same, if not greater, health benefits from physical activity as lean individuals. Lean men classified as being unfit actually had a

health indicators such as blood pressure, cholesterol levels and cardiorespiratory fitness levels with your doctor or specialist health professional such as an exercise physiologist. Other indicators you can monitor yourself include energy levels, mood, sleep patterns and ease of completing daily activities.

Changing the way we think about exercise is also needed. Exercise is as crucial as healthy eating, managing stress and not smoking for your health and longevity. To gain the most benefits exercise needs to be part of your day, something that becomes routine and second nature as opposed to a program you do in the short term.

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