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# Walk the Talk

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*Get off the couch  
and give yourself an  
energy boost.*



*Enjoy a better  
quality of life in  
the new year.*

## Walk the Talk

BY WINSTON J. CRAIG

**A**n estimated 80 percent of Americans do not have an exercise program. So why are we so comfortable sitting on the couch when we know the value of regular exercise and how crucial it is to living a healthy lifestyle? Exercise can add not only years to your life but life to your years.

Exercise is known to lower your blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels, and lower your chances of Type 2 diabetes. Exercise and diet combined are an effective way for you to achieve your weight-loss goals, rather than dieting alone. Regular exercise is also valuable and effective for helping to keep the weight off. Strength training also helps to maintain muscular strength and bone mass. Without it, we lose muscle mass, our muscles weaken and elderly folks can easily lose their balance. Exercise also improves your digestion and the quality of your sleep, and greatly diminishes anxiety and depression.

As 2011 kicks off, we need to get our exercise program into high gear. Walking is a really good activity to get into shape. You don't need any special equipment. You can do it anywhere, anytime, whatever the weather. Casual walking will burn about 250 calories per hour.

The psychological benefits of exercise were recently measured by researchers in Georgia. They found that even a low-intensity workout, such as a regular leisurely stroll, could boost the energy level of a sedentary person by as much as 20 percent, compared to a couch-potato. Light workouts were found to fight fatigue by up to 65 percent. In another study, sedentary postmenopausal women who exercised for one to three hours a week for six months not



only lost weight but also experienced enhanced mental outlook and renewed vitality. Regular exercise can go a long way toward increasing one's energy level.

There are almost 12 million cancer survivors in the U.S., with about one-half of them breast or prostate cancer survivors. Research has shown that those cancer survivors who exercise have better

everyday function and overall quality of life. In addition, men and women who walk 30 minutes a day, five times a week, have a 40 percent reduction in risk of stroke.

To stick with your exercise program long-term, you must enjoy the workout. Find a soul mate. A friend, relative or a colleague can support and encourage you through tough times. Connecting with someone who shares your goals will enable you to stick it out. Workout sessions must be scheduled in regular time slots or else the day will slip away without any time spent on exercise. Realistic and safe goals should be set that can be reasonably accomplished. Keep a journal on your progress. Keep your routine simple, as you are more likely to continue the program when there is little hassle involved. Vary your program—with cycling, walking, use of an elliptical, routines with stretch bands, etc.—so you don't get bored. Now is the time to start.

Winston Craig, Ph.D., RD, is a professor of nutrition at Andrews University.