

Splurge - Volume 4 Issue 9 (September 2009)

Article by: Joseph P. Galichia, MD, FACC

Interventional Cardiologist

Galichia Medical Group, PA

316-684-3838 / 800-657-7250

www.galichia.com

FITNESS FORWARD

I was driving around Wichita the other day, and saw the sidewalks filled with people walking or jogging and kids playing in the park. As terrific as the summer is, Kansas in autumn can be a perfect time for exercising. With kids back to school, many of us adults look to start our exercise programs, and lose a few pounds before the holidays. The best way to do this is by starting a fitness regime. But many of my patients ask, "Where does one begin?"

If you're rarely exercised or if you have been sedentary for a while; if you have a history (or family history) of cardiovascular disease or diabetes; if you are over twenty pounds overweight or have any other risk factors (like smoking), or are over the age of 40, I strongly suggest consulting your physician before embarking on a regimen. A doctor may want to perform a stress test to see if your body can withstand exercise. Ideally, we all want to perform exercises that are both aerobic and those that include light resistance training (such as weight training). Knowledge is the key to fitness, and exercising as consciously as you can means you will realize the greatest benefits from your efforts. Here are a few places to start:

WEIGH YOURSELF

See where you are and where you want your body to be. Your physician can give guidelines as to a healthy weight range based on your gender and height. Talk to your doctor about any lifestyle changes or medications you are on as these can effect appetite and weight levels. Include any history of eating disorders or obesity as these can make a difference in how you and your physician approach exercise and weight management.

WALK A MILE

Someone can help you find and take your pulse (generally speaking – find with two fingers on your wrist or the side of your throat). Take your pulse reading before and after the walk. See how long it took you to walk a mile, and note that too. Are you out of breath, or just getting going? In other words, observe how you're feeling before and after exertion.

MEASUREMENTS

An easy way to check for fitness levels is to measure. Measure the circumference of your waist. Have a health professional or fitness specialist help you find your BMI (body mass index) score. Any bone mass scan can be very instrumental to see what risk you may have for osteoporosis. These simple readings can be a great source of information for you moving ahead.

Your doctor may have other tests he or she wants you to take in order to get the ball rolling on your fitness future. So the next step is to decide what you like to do. Studies show that even thirty minutes of exercise a day helps stave off heart disease, reduce weight, increases enjoyment of life, and reduces the risk of depression, stroke and diabetes.

Injury can be an issue in any sort of exercise. Stretching for at least fifteen minutes before and after running, cycling, or other types of more strenuous activity is beneficial. As we age, we must continue to concentrate on flexibility, bone strength, and muscle endurance. Plus, gentle stretching is a terrific way to avoid injury and relax. If you have had a previous injury (particularly to the back, the hamstrings, or the knees) review what the best exercises are for your particular situation. Most importantly, however, I caution my patients to listen to their own bodies. We used to say “no pain, no gain,” but I advocate more of a moderate continuous, fun exercise regime that makes you feel great, laugh out loud and gets your heart rate up and your stress levels down.

Be daring but be true to yourself. Try something new that sounds like fun. Try a group activity as well as a private aspect to your routine. Personally I enjoy my time on the stationary cycle and swimming, but I love meeting my friends for a game of tennis or softball. Athletics are a big part of my life, but so is time with my friends and family. Combine the two, and watch as your stressful days are replaced by companionship and smiles, a smaller waistline, better health and increased energy.

The benefits of exercise are plentiful but, take my word for it, you will probably find more that I had room to write about. The human body is made to move, and even those who claim to dislike working out will see the advantages.

Listen to Dr. Galichia's Radio Show – “Take Your Health to Heart” every Saturday from 11 AM to Noon on 1480 KQAM in Wichita. If you have any medically related questions, please call us during the LIVE broadcast at 1-800-TALK-997 or 1-800-825-5997. You can also e-mail your questions anytime to **GalichiaRadio@Galichia.com**. We would love to hear from you!!!

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