

Keeping your health and well-being in the know

MyHealthTALK

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Courtesy of Asset Health



Dance your way to fitness

Need a way to get your heart pumping and have some fun at the same time?

Interested in building your bone mass without going to the gym?

DANCE!!!

With the popularity of shows like *Dancing With the Stars*, and programs like Zumba®, more people are becoming aware of the benefits of dance and movement. Dance is something you can do with or without a partner, in your home or in a social setting, and it is a great stress reliever.

You can look for organized classes for adults or children, or turn on some music at home and let yourself and kids move to the music. Other options include going out with your friends for an evening of line dancing or salsa dancing. No need to be self-conscious; there is no right or wrong way to dance.

The aerobic exercise from dancing provides the same quality of workout as running on a treadmill or elliptical machine. The dance movements will also work your core and strengthen your abdominal muscles. At the same time, the constant leg movements strengthen your legs and the load bearing exercise increases bone mass.

Dancing will energize you and won't feel like exercise. Give it a whirl!!!

Health Benefits of Owning a Pet

Having a pet in your life can be very beneficial to your health. Owning a pet can ward off depression, lower blood pressure, and lessen anxiety. It might even improve your social life.

In several different studies it has been shown that pets can help ward off depression and loneliness. Pets offer love and companionship, enjoy comfortable silences, they can keep secrets and are excellent snugglers. Pets make great companions for the elderly, especially cats since they require less care than a dog. It gives them something to care for and they provide a loving home to the animal and help them to remain active and healthy.

Pets are also great stress reducers since a pet is a great listener and they do not judge us. Playing with a dog can elevate levels of serotonin and dopamine, nerve transmitters that are known to have pleasurable and calming properties.

Pets can control blood pressure better than drugs. ACE inhibiting drugs can generally reduce blood pressure but they are not as effective in controlling spikes in blood pressure due to stress and tension. In one study, stockbrokers with high blood pressure who adopted a cat or dog had lower blood pressure readings in stressful situations than did people who did not own a pet.

Pets encourage you to get out and exercise. Owning a dog means you are more likely to get out and go for a walk.

Pets can also help with social support. When you are out walking with a dog it makes you more approachable, others are more likely to stop and talk to you if you are walking a dog.

Pet ownership, however, isn't for everyone. Owning a pet does come with additional work and responsibility, which can bring its own stress. However, for most people, the benefits of having a pet far outweigh the drawbacks.

Source: *The Health Benefits of Pet Ownership* – Elizabeth Scott, M.S.
5 Ways Pets Can Improve Your Health – Jeanie Lerche Davis



National Youth Sports Safety Month

April is National Youth Sports Safety Month! This is a month-long event that was initiated by the National Youth Sports Safety Foundation (NYSSF) in 1993 to promote safety while participating in sports.

Each year, over 20 million kids in the US participate in sports and almost one million suffer serious sports related injuries. Sports related injuries account for 41% of musculoskeletal injuries in kids age 5-21 years. Most injuries occur in 13 year olds, who are immature physically and emotionally.

As the weather gets warm, we tend to spend more time outside. After being cooped up inside for months, it is no wonder children also enjoy the outdoors this time of year. Organized youth sports activities begin, soccer leagues start and youngsters start practicing how to ride a bike.

Unfortunately, along with this increased activity, we typically see an increase in sports-related injuries. Luckily, most of these injuries are preventable with proper conditioning, techniques and training practices and protective gear.

Some common sports and related injuries include:

Baseball and softball—Shoulder, arm, finger, and ligament injuries

Gymnastics—Back, foot, ankle, hand, and back injuries, and stress fractures

Football—Head and neck injuries, concussions, dislocations, and ligament injuries

Running—Planter fasciitis, shin splints, and foot and ankle stress fractures

Swimming—Shoulder, arm and rotator cuff injuries, and tennis elbow

Wrestling—Neck, shoulder, and arm injuries and strains

Tennis—Shoulder, arm, and rotator cuff injuries, and tennis elbow

Experts recommend that kids involved in sports participate in a complete fitness and flexibility program to help identify imbalances and areas for improvement to prevent injuries. It is also recommended that children receive a sports physical prior to participating in youth sports to ensure there are no preexisting conditions.

Nutrition for Young Athletes

Eating the right foods helps keep student athletes energized throughout the day, and helps them perform better during physical activities.

The food you eat before, during and after a workout or competition can influence your performance and recovery. Here are some general guidelines:

- The major source of fuel for active muscles is carbohydrate. Examples of food to eat the night before a competition, or day of competition, include pasta, whole grain bread, potatoes, vegetables and fruit.
- Because most sports are in the afternoon, a healthy breakfast is recommended the morning before competition. Whole-grain cereal with low-fat milk and fruit are good choices. Or try whole wheat toast with a tablespoon of peanut butter or low-fat cottage cheese for protein.
- The closer you get to competition, the smaller the snack should be, such as a piece of fruit, fruit juice or sports beverage.
- Drink 17-20 ounces (preferably water) two to three hours before a workout or competition. Add another 7-10 ounces 10 to 30 minutes before the event starts. **Replacing any fluid lost during exercise should be the No. 1 priority for any athlete.**

Resource: www.freep.com

