Dear Alice,

What are the health implications of a sedentary life?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Everyone needs to kick back and relax now and then, but too much bonding time with the couch and TV remote control can lead to serious health problems. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), less than 50 percent of adults in the United States do not meet the Physical Activity Guidelines.

The human body functions best when it is active regularly. In fact, there are a number of ways in which regular physical activity can improve health, including:

- Reducing the risk of developing coronary heart disease (CHD)
- Reducing the risk of stroke
- Lowering both total blood cholesterol and triglycerides and increases high-density lipoproteins (HDL or the "good" cholesterol)
- Lowering the risk of developing high blood pressure
- Lowering the risk of developing non-insulin-dependent (type 2) diabetes mellitus
- Reducing the risk of developing colon cancer
- Helping people achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
- Reducing feelings of depression and anxiety
- Promoting psychological well-being and reduces feelings of stress
- Helping build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints
- Helping older adults become stronger and better able to move about without falling or becoming excessively fatigued

Leading a sedentary life doesn't mean you will develop all or even most of the conditions listed above, however your risk for developing any of these conditions could be higher. Daily physical activity ? even walking for as little as a half-hour each day ? can greatly reduce the risk for many major medical problems.

An excellent way to stay healthy is to stay active ? with or without a friend or exercise buddy ? whether you're swimming, rock-climbing, working up a sweat at the gym, dancing, walking around the neighborhood, taking the stairs rather than the elevator, parking a little farther...
away and/or getting off at an earlier subway or bus stop. You can get moving in so many ways that you are certain to find one or more that you enjoy and can stick with. For some general tips on getting started, visit the CDC website [4] and learn how to overcome some common barriers to exercise.

Anything that makes you put down the remote and get off of the couch is a step toward a healthy, more fulfilling, and longer life. Start slow, find something you enjoy, and keep moving!

Alice!

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