

The Importance of Regular Physical Activity

As a society, our awareness of the importance of healthy living has never been higher, and the benefits achieved through regular physical activity are clear.

The Public Health Agency of Canada's **Healthy Living Unit** (<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/fitness/index.html>) suggests that there are three (3) types of activities you need to do to keep your body healthy: aerobic activities, strength and endurance activities and flexibility activities.

The **Centres for Disease Control & Prevention** (www.cdc.gov) lists numerous health benefits that result from regular exercise, including the following:

- Reduces the risk of developing coronary heart disease (CHD) and the risk of dying from CHD
- Reduces the risk of stroke
- Reduces the risk of having a second heart attack in people who have already had one heart attack
- Lowers both total blood cholesterol and triglycerides and increases high-density lipoproteins (HDL or the "good" cholesterol)
- Lowers the risk of developing high blood pressure
- Helps reduce blood pressure in people who already have hypertension
- Lowers the risk of developing non-insulin-dependent (type 2) diabetes mellitus
- Reduces the risk of developing colon cancer
- Helps people achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety
- Promotes psychological well-being and reduces feelings of stress
- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints
- Helps older adults become stronger and better able to move about without falling or becoming excessively fatigued

Complicating matters is the fact that our culture has evolved such that we find ourselves busier than ever before and are finding it increasingly difficult to incorporate healthy living into our routines on a daily basis. Our ability to overcome our busy lifestyles and achieve long-term physical and psychological well being depends on making the time necessary to include daily activities that will improve our quality of life.