

Get Into betterHEALTH!

with Dr. Derek Lee

To join our e-mail list for our **free monthly newsletter**, just send the e-mail links of your friends and family to: drlee@yourbetterhealthguide.com

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February 2006: In this issue!

- Health Risks and Productivity
- Low-Fat, High-Carb Diet Doesn't Result in Weight Gain
- The Hazards of Inactivity
- New Sleep Statistics

If you have any specific questions just email me at
drlee@yourbetterhealthguide.com.

Dr. Derek Lee

Health Risks Linked to Productivity Loss

Health Risks	Excess Loss
Current smoker	2.8%
Physical activity	1.9%
Safety belt usage	3.3%
Use relaxation medicine	8.4%
Life dissatisfaction	4.5%
Poor physical health	1.9%
Job dissatisfaction	3.0%
High stress	4.1%
High blood pressure	1.3%
Obese (BMI 30+)	1.5%



Study of 28,375 workers

Source: *Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine*. 47(8):769-777. Aug. 2005.

● Health Risks and Productivity

Reduced productivity due to poor physical or emotional health, called presenteeism, may be more costly to organizations than the increase in healthcare costs due to health risks. The University of Illinois looked at the cost of decreased productivity linked to poor health in 28,375 employees. They found that as the number of health risks increased, so did presenteeism resulting in a decrease in productivity.

The health risks most closely linked to poor productivity were those in the mental health domain such as high stress levels and low life satisfaction. Other risk factors closely linked to impaired productivity were smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, not wearing safety belts, and high blood pressure.

Employees were divided into 3 groups based on the number of their health risks: low-risk (0-2 risk factors), medium-risk (3-4 risk factors), and high-risk (5 or more risk factors). Medium-risk employees experienced a 6.2% decrease in productivity, and high-risk employees a 12.2% decrease in productivity compared to low risk employees. When dollar values were attached to this decrease in productivity, it amounted to \$1,392 to \$2,592 per employee per year. This is as much or more than the increase in healthcare costs due to health risks.

This means that the savings due to increased productivity from better employee health may be just as important, or even more important, than the savings from decreased healthcare expenses. This information should help companies see the real value in establishing a comprehensive wellness program to protect the health of their employees.

Reference: Burton WN et al. The Association of Health Risks with On-the-Job Productivity. *J Occup Environ Med.* 2005;47(8):769-777. Aug. 2005.

● Low-Fat, High-Carb Diet Doesn't Result in Weight Gain

Obesity in the U.S. has increased dramatically during the past several decades. Numerous diets have been touted and dietary fads come and go. Many of these "fad" diets tell users to cut down on carbohydrate-rich foods in order to lose weight. To test this idea, researchers designed a 7-year comparison study.

The clinical trial included 48,835 postmenopausal women. One group was assigned to eat a modified low-fat, high-carbohydrate diet, and a control group received only dietary education materials and was not encouraged to make any dietary changes. Neither group was instructed to regulate calorie intake or to exercise.

Results. The study, part of the Women's Health Initiative Dietary Modification Trial, started in 1993 and continued through 2004. Researchers found that:

- A low-fat eating pattern that encourages eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods does not result in weight gain in postmenopausal women.
- The average weight of women in the experimental group was slightly less at the end of the study and there was a decrease in average daily fat intake (from 38.8 % of calories at the beginning to 29.8 % at the conclusion).
- Women who ate the least fat lost the most weight during the study.

Summary. Reducing fat intake and increasing fruit, vegetable, and whole grain foods in the diet did not lead to weight gain over the seven-year period. In fact, the average participant lost a small amount of weight. Achieving and maintaining weight loss often depends on personal choices to manage or reduce calorie intake and to be physically active.

References: Howard BV et al. Low-Fat Dietary Pattern and Weight Change Over 7 Years. The Women's Health Initiative Dietary Modification Trial. *JAMA.* 2006;295:39-49. Jan. 4, 2006.

Dansinger ML et al. Low-Fat Diets and Weight Change. *JAMA.* 2006;295:94-95. Jan. 4, 2006.

● The Hazards of Inactivity

You often hear the advice, "Be sure to get permission from your doctor before you begin an exercise program." This is good advice for older persons and those with health problems, especially if they are planning a vigorous activity such as running. But you seldom hear this advice: "If you are planning to stay sedentary, it is very important to talk to your doctor first and get their permission."

If you plan on being sedentary this year, here are some hazards to your health you should be aware of:

- 1. You double your risk of getting diabetes.** Physical activity helps prevent insulin resistance, the underlying cause of adult onset diabetes. One study showed that for every 2 hours a person watched TV daily (a dangerous sedentary pursuit), their risk of diabetes increased 14%.
- 2. You increase your risk of cancer.** Sedentary people are 30-40% more likely to develop colon cancer. The risk of breast cancer and pancreatic cancer increases as well. One study showed a 40% decrease in cancer mortality in high-fit persons compared to low-fit persons.
- 3. It may turn your brain to Jell-O.** Not really, but the evidence is fairly clear that regular physical activity helps prevent cognitive decline and dementia. One study in older persons showed that those who walked

regularly, gardened, went jogging, etc. were 50% less likely to develop dementia 5 years later compared to sedentary persons.

4. A sedentary lifestyle increases your risk of a heart attack. It's no surprise that couch potatoes have the highest risk of a heart attack. In the Nurses' Health Study, women who walked 3 hours or more a week (half an hour daily) had only half as many heart attacks as those who didn't have a regular walking program. Exercise strengthens the heart and keeps it in good health.

5. You increase your risk of stroke. Data from the Aerobic Research Center showed that active men dropped their risk of stroke by two-thirds. Active women in the Nurses' Health Study dropped their risk of stroke by 50%.

6. Lack of physical activity increases muscle loss. You either use it or lose it! Inactivity is the best way to lose muscle mass and eventually adequate strength to function properly. The best way to stay out of the nursing home is to get regular exercise, including strength training.

7. It weakens your bones. Bones, just like muscles, require regular exercise to maintain their mineral content and strength. Every year we get older (past about age 25-30), the bones grow a little weaker. This process is much faster in inactive persons. Weak bones are responsible for 1.5 million fractures a year. Weight bearing activities and weight lifting are the best exercises for bone health.

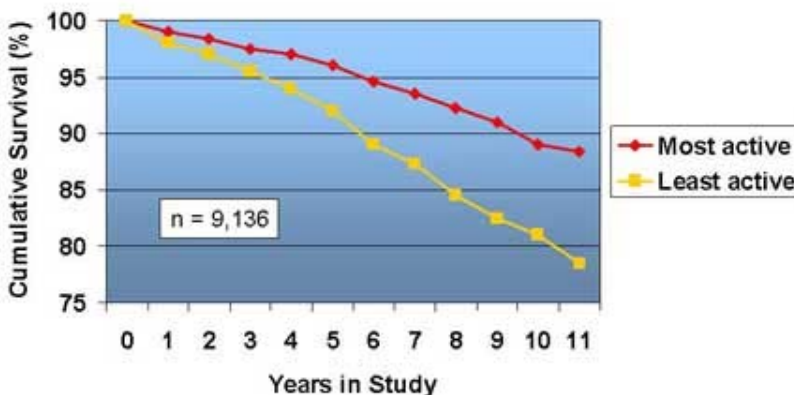
8. You are more likely to become depressed. It's true; inactive people get depressed more often than those who are physically active. Physical activity is a good mood elevator. Staying fit is good for the brain as well as the biceps!

9. You are more likely to gain excess weight! One study showed that an hour of walking daily cut the risk of obesity by 24%. In our current society, if you don't exercise, you are likely to go to pot! Nearly two-thirds of the population is now considered overweight, which leads to a host of other health problems.

10. Your immune system is depressed. People who get regular physical activity have the best functioning immune system. It's our immune system that combats disease and illnesses such as the flu and colds. People who over-do and get exhausted can also decrease their immunity, but regular, moderate exercise is a good health booster.

If you are still considering being sedentary this year, be sure to make an appointment with your physician right away. You are embarking on a dangerous journey and you will need medical clearance before you begin. Ask your doctor if they think it is safe for you! If it isn't, you could consider getting a pedometer and start stepping your way toward health. Gradually work up to 8,000 or more steps a day and you may get a whole new outlook on life.

Activity Level and Survival



Source: *Annals of Epidemiology*. 12:543-52, Nov. 2002.

● New Sleep Statistics

Have you been feeling more tired lately? Energy levels seem low? Maybe you need more sleep. New data from the National Center for Health Statistics shows a trend toward getting less sleep. In the last 20 years, all age groups (18-75+) are reporting less sleep. Since 1985, the number of men (aged 45-64) getting only 6 hours or less of sleep has increased from about 22% to 32%, a 45% increase. The increase in women was about 35%. This is an alarming trend.

Sleep Habits

- The 2005 “Sleep in America” poll found that:
 - Adults in America sleep on the average about 6.9 hours per week
 - 40% of Americans are getting less than 7 hours sleep per night
 - 71% of Americans get less than 8 hours
- Persons showing the best health and life expectancy get at least 7-8 hours of sleep each night

Sources: National Sleep Foundation website, 2006.
Alameda Study, *American Journal of Health Education*, Sept./Oct. 2005.

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Inadequate sleep has been linked to various health problems:

- Increased risk of obesity
- Decreased efficiency and productivity
- Higher stress levels (poorer coping ability)
- Decreased immunity (more susceptible to colds and flu)
- Decreased life expectancy

Previous studies show that people getting 6 hours or less of sleep have a shortened life expectancy compared to people getting 7-8 hours of sleep regularly. One of the fastest ways to feel and perform your best is to get adequate rest. If you want good health, don't cut corners on sleep.

Reference: NCHS. QuickStats, reported in *JAMA*. 2005;294:2692. Dec. 7, 2005.

Office Hours.

betterHEALTH Clinic

Monday	9:15 - 12:00/2:30 - 7:00
Wednesday	9:15 - 12:00/2:30 - 7:00
Friday	2:00 - 6:00
Saturday	9:00 - 12:00 (every other Saturday)

Corporate Clinics

Tuesday	Kraft Canada, Rogers Barrie
Thursday	Rogers Cable York Mills
Friday	Rogers Cable Richmond Hill