

by Scott_LaFee

Even a modest amount of brisk walking has significant health benefits, a new Duke University study has found, reducing waistlines and the risk of metabolic syndrome (MetS), an increasingly common condition linked to obesity and a sedentary lifestyle.

NO PAIN, NO GAIN - Even a modest amount of brisk walking has significant health benefits, a new Duke University study has found. CNS Photo. MEDTRONICA - The Needy Meds Web site at www.needymeds.com connects you to programs sponsored by pharmaceutical manufacturers to help the poor buy medications. CNS Photo. Roughly one-quarter of all American adults have MetS, which is characterized by having at least three of five risk factors: a large waist circumference, high blood pressure, high levels of triglycerides, low amounts of HDL or "good cholesterol" and high blood sugar.

But Duke researchers found that walking just 30 minutes a day, six days a week significantly reduced MetS. They studied 171 middle-aged, overweight men and women. Before beginning exercise programs, 41 percent of the participants met the criteria for MetS. After the eight-month study, only 27 percent did.

Those who exercised least, walking about 11 miles a week, gained significant benefit; those who exercised most (jogging about 17 miles a week) gained the most benefit. Everyone reduced his or her waistlines, even without changing diets.

By contrast, the inactive control group added an average of 1.5 pounds and a half-inch to their waistlines. "That may not sound like much," said William Krauss, a Duke cardiologist, "but that's just six months. Over a decade, that's an additional 20 pounds and 10 inches at the belt line."

MEDTRONICA

The Web site connects patient assistance programs sponsored by various pharmaceutical manufacturers with people who can't afford to purchase their prescriptions by traditional means. It is informational only. It does not provide medicine or financial assistance.

STORIES FOR THE WAITING ROOM

During the Middle Ages, European hospitals tended to be squalid, fetid, deadly places. On average, one in five patients checked out - as in dead. The mortality rate was so high that some hospitals required a burial deposit for all incoming patients.

OBSERVATION

Many serious illnesses are nothing but the expression of a serious dissatisfaction with life.

- Medical author Paul Tournier (1898-1986)

GET ME THAT. STAT!

It's estimated that \$25 billion a year is lost in American productivity due to the common headache.

NEVER SAY DIET

The world's speed-eating record for fruitcake is 4 pounds, 14.25 ounces in 10 minutes, held by Sonya Thomas and set in 2003. It is unknown whether the fruitcake has actually been digested.

PHOBIA OF THE WEEK

Cathisophobia - fear of sitting.

LAST WORDS

"Give Dayrolles a chair."

- Philip Dormer Stanhope Chesterfield (1694-1773) was an English statesman and writer, chiefly remembered for "Letters to His Son," a witty monograph that described the ideal 18th-century gentleman.

Lord Chesterfield was on his deathbed when he received a visit from his godson, Solomon Dayrolles. Rousing himself, Chesterfield instructed a servant to provide his godson with a seat, the epitome of politeness to the very end.

CUTTING DOWN DOESN'T WORK

Smoking just a few cigarettes a day must be better for you than puffing the whole pack, right? Not according to a study in Tobacco Control, which says that smoking less doesn't reduce your risk for cancer and other diseases. More than 50,000 smokers were studied for 20 years, and it was found that those who cut back were just as likely to die early from lung cancer and heart attacks as those who puffed like chimneys the entire time. Only those who stopped entirely reduced their risk.

LAUGH YOUR WAY TO FITNESS

According to a study in the International Journal of Obesity, laughing out loud can help you burn more calories. For 90 minutes, 45 people watched videos that were either funny or big snooze fests, while scientists measured their heart rate and calorie burn. Laughing out loud increased both numbers up to 20 percent compared with watching quietly. So giggle away and burn a few extra calories.

- Compiled by R.J. Ignelzi