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NEWSLETTER

Daily workout could halve cancer risk

A Finnish study has found that a regular dose of relatively intense exercise may halve the risk of developing cancer.

Researchers studied the lifestyles of 2,560 men between the ages of 42 and 61 over the course of a year. During an average follow-up time of 16 years, 181 study subjects died from cancer, although none had a history of the disease at the study's outset.

The data showed that the men who partook in moderate to high intensity exercise for a minimum of half an hour per day had a 50 per cent lower likelihood of developing cancer than the other study subjects.

An increase of 1.2 metabolic units (oxygen consumption) was found to be related to a decreased risk of cancer death, particularly in lung and gastrointestinal cancers, after factors including age, alcohol consumption, smoking, BMI, and fibre/fat intake had been taken into consideration.

The study authors said, 'The intensity of leisure-time physical activity should be at least moderate so that beneficial effect of physical activity for reducing overall cancer mortality can be achieved'.

Source: British Journal of Sports Medicine

Excessive sitting compromises health

A recent Australian study has found that too much sitting down has health repercussions.

After conducting a study, University of Queensland researchers came to the conclusion that excessive inactivity has a negative effect on levels of both blood pressure and blood sugar, which in turn can lead to heart attacks, cancer and type 2 diabetes.

The team of researchers, led by Professor Neville Owen from the university's Cancer Prevention Research Centre, studied the amount of time that people spend watching television, and pitted it against data pertaining to their blood glucose and cholesterol levels.

The amount of television that people watched was found to be related to blood cholesterol and blood glucose, even after taking into consideration the effect of their physical activity levels and the effect they may have experienced from being overweight or obese. This means that even active people who also spend long periods of time in a sedentary position could suffer health problems as a consequence.

Speaking to the ABC, Owen said 'Large muscles in the legs and the backside, which are designed to be standing, maintaining posture, moving about in hunter gatherers, when those muscles are just immobilised for long periods of time, it looks like there are mechanisms in the muscle through something called lipoprotein lipase, that seems to push signals up through into the hormones and other systems that control cholesterol in the blood and you end up with what looks like a pretty unhealthy profile, specifically coming out of that flaccid, non-working muscle'.

In an age where an enormous proportion of the workforce spend the majority of their day in a seated position, these findings do not bode well. But, unless we radically and quickly change the way in which most workplaces operate, it seems that the best we can do is be practical and insert small amounts of activity into our working day wherever we can, and to this end Owen recommended have frequent breaks from the desk to take shorts walks.

Source: ABC online

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Yoga key to mindful eating

New research from the US has found an association between the regular practice of yoga and mindful eating, which is in turn linked to maintenance of a healthy weight.

Following up their own previous study which had found that middle-aged yoga practitioners gained less weight over a 10-year period than their non-yogic counterparts, researchers at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center found that people with awareness of why they ate and who ceased eating when full, weighed less than 'mindless eaters' who ate when they weren't hungry, or in response to anxiety or depression.

Dr Alan Kristal, associate head of the centre's Cancer Prevention Program in the Public Health Sciences Division, said, 'In our earlier study, we found that middle-age people who practice yoga gained less weight over a 10-year period than those who did not. This was independent of physical activity and dietary patterns. We hypothesized that mindfulness – a skill learned either directly or indirectly through yoga – could affect eating behavior'.

Kristal and his team created a survey that measured factors including disinhibition (eating even when full), food awareness, eating in response to environmental cues, eating in response to emotional impulses, and focusing on other things while eating.

Kristal commented, 'These findings fit with our hypothesis that yoga increases mindfulness in eating and leads to less weight gain over time, independent of the physical activity aspect of yoga practice'.

Source: *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*

Train the body to its full potential

Imagine if you could achieve a superior workout each time you trained, getting an extra 10 or 20 per cent from your body without working any harder.

The Alexander Technique is a centuries old practice of body awareness that enables users to unleash the real power of their body, helping them become fitter, stronger and more graceful – and there are no complicated classes or treatments involved.

Used for generations, and embraced more recently by actors, musicians and savvy sportspeople, the technique provides a grounded understanding of movement that allows users to hone their athletic ability. The Alexander Technique allows the body to be pushed to its full potential, so you can train with increased self-awareness and style.

By achieving correct body alignment and balance you can apply the technique to every training session, Pump, indoor cycle, boxing or aqua class to create the optimum exercise experience.

The technique also promotes reduced wear and tear on the body and joints, which can decrease the need for massage, physio and chiropractors. The *British Medical Journal* (2008;337:a884), reports that lessons in the Alexander Technique can offer major reductions in pain even 12 months after the last lesson, and a randomised controlled trial published in August 2008* showed that six lessons could result in an 84 per cent reduction in incidence of back pain in 579 patients (reduced from 21 days per month to 3 days per month).

One of the Alexander Technique's best regarded teachers Jeremy Chance, is coming to Sydney in August to present two public workshops entitled 'An Introduction to the Alexander Technique and its Practical Applications to Back Pain and Enhanced Performance'.

For more information and to register, visit www.bodychance.com.au/fitness, e-mail info@bodychance.com.au or call 1300 305 737.



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Source: *Body Chance Pty Ltd*

Could beetroot juice be the new energy drink?

It looks as though the Aussie love-affair with the humble beetroot may be able to reap its rewards on the sports field, with a recent UK study showing that beetroot juice may increase stamina and endurance by up to 16 per cent.

Researchers from the University of Exeter found that nitrate in beetroot juice reduced the intake of oxygen by a higher degree than other known methods.

Eight male study participants between the ages of 19 and 38 drank half a litre of organic beetroot juice daily, for six days, after which they completed a selection of tests on an exercise bike. The results were measured against the findings of the same tests when conducted using a daily placebo in place of the beetroot juice.

After consuming beetroot juice, the participants cycled for an average 92 seconds longer (16 per cent) than they did after drinking the placebo beverage, and also displayed a lower resting blood pressure.

Study author Andy Jones, a professor in the University of Exeter's School of Sport and Health Sciences, said 'Our study is the first to show that nitrate-rich food can increase exercise endurance. We were amazed by the effects of beetroot juice on oxygen uptake because these effects cannot be achieved by any other known means, including training. I am sure professional and amateur athletes will be interested in the results of this research. I am also keen to explore the relevance of the findings to those people who suffer from poor fitness and may be able to use dietary supplements to help them go about their daily lives' Jones added.

Source: *University of Exeter*

Organic Vs 'Conventional' produce

A recent British review of studies into organic produce suggests that the nutrient content of organic foodstuffs is almost the same as that of non-organic produce.

Study author Alan Dangour, a public health nutritionist with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said, 'We did not find any important differences in nutrient content between organically and conventionally produced foods'.

The popularity of organic produce grew by 22 per cent in the UK between 2005 and 2007, and by 20 per cent in the US in the same time period.

Connie Diekman, past president of the American Dietetic Association and director of university nutrition at Washington University in St Louis, welcomed the review, saying, 'As a registered dietitian, it is good to see that a systematic review of the literature supports what has long been believed – that the nutritional content of traditionally grown foods and organic foods are comparable. This report provides confirmation for consumers that if they choose conventionally grown foods or organic foods they will be meeting their nutritional needs'.

The researchers based their review on 55 'satisfactory quality' studies (disregarding another 107 unsatisfactory ones). No notable differences were found between conventional and organic crops' content of vitamin C, calcium, potassium, magnesium, zinc or copper. Organic crops did have higher levels of phosphorus, and conventionally produced crops had higher levels of nitrogen. No differences were noted in regards to animal products.

Although this may potentially seem like bad news for organic produce – why pay a premium for foods with no significant nutrient benefits? – it doesn't tell the whole story. Sheah Rarback, director of nutrition at the Mailman Center for Child Development at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, said that when it comes to organic food, 'You have to

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also look at what you're *not* getting. Maybe it's not a big difference nutritionally, but conventional products may have more pesticides. We know that young children are getting the nutrition, whatever choice they make, but we also have to look at the pesticide issue. A study published in *Environmental Health Perspectives* found that children eating conventionally grown fruit had pesticide residue in their urine, which decreased after just five days on an organic diet'.

Source: *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition and HealthDay News*

Overcome the daily grind the ride way

While Australia is stuck in peak hour traffic, the Ride to Work Day program is encouraging Australian workers to embrace an affordable, hassle and carbon emission-free mode of transport.

Sarah Dalley, Ride to Work Day spokesperson said the free program assists those wanting to try riding to work as an alternative mode of transport which can ease the pressures of modern life; 'You save money, your health and your peace of mind. You arrive at work energised and arrive home unwound from the day' she said.

The initiative is proving popular, with an estimated 110,000 Australian workers participating in National Ride to Work Day last year, a 26 per cent increase in registrations on the previous year. The annual event not only gets people thinking about cycling, but encourages them to have a go; 'It's the only national day on the calendar where first-timers and regular bike riders can celebrate the act of riding to work together. Once people try riding to work they discover how liberating independent travel is. And it feels good to do something now to help the environment tomorrow' Dalley said.

Riding to work is also a simple way for many Australians, regardless of age, to meet the recommended 30 minutes of daily moderate-intensity physical activity; 'Exercise makes you feel good, you have more energy and your overall health improves. When you get all that from riding to work it's hard to think of reasons not to' Dalley said.

The Ride to Work program, now in its 3rd year nationally, is run year-round with a focus on Wednesday 14 October 2009, Ride to Work Day. Thousands of people, of all ages across Australia attend community and workplace breakfasts held in capital cities and regional areas celebrating riding to work.

Participants are encouraged to register their ride on the day at no cost, which assists in understanding bike commuter behaviours and campaigning for better riding facilities to councils, local, state and federal governments.

For more information and Ride to Work Day registration details visit www.ridetowork.com.au

Source: *Bicycle Victoria*