

Weekly Wellness Tip – Exercise vs. Physical Activity

We sometimes we hear people say “I don’t need to exercise, I’m always active” ; they cite examples such as taking care of their home and family, spending time outdoors, or working in a job that places physical demands on them. While exercise is a type of physical activity, being active by itself, doesn’t produce the same results as exercise.

We realize the word “exercise” may cause some people to wince if it isn’t part of their current lifestyle or they once participated in an exercise that wasn’t enjoyable. Physical activity (that doesn’t specifically include exercise) can be of benefit when combined with healthy eating to help prevent certain chronic illnesses, reduce stress or for weight management. Regular exercise adds another level of benefits beyond that of physical activity. There *is* a difference that’s important to recognize – so what is it?

Exercise is a form of physical activity that is structured and planned to improve at least one aspect of physical fitness – strength, flexibility or endurance. Exercise is usually specific and measurable; examples include resistance training three times a week, doing whole body exercises daily or walking 30 minutes on a treadmill at the recommended percentage of your maximum heart rate.

Physical activity includes movement that is part of your daily life – at home, work or for recreation. Physical activity is not easily measured and may not target specific parts of the body. It is possible to include activities that build strength, endurance and flexibility as part of your daily activities however. Sometimes, exercise can be made part of an activity by altering the activity in a way that resembles exercise. An example might be walking at a faster than casual pace for a specific amount of time or distance – this helps to insure the heart rate is raised to obtain a cardiovascular benefit.

Regardless of which way you look at it, moving your body in whichever form of activity you prefer and can fit into your life regularly (exercise or physical activity) will be of benefit. Over the long run, we benefit most from some combination of both. The key is to find activities you enjoy and then to do them regularly.

In future emails, we’ll talk more about the benefits of exercise and how to overcome barriers to participating in physical activity or exercise.

Our Creating Wellness Assessment will help identify how your lifestyle choices impact your overall health and wellness. Please call or ask us how you can schedule an assessment and begin to improve your level of wellness today!

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