



WALK KANSAS

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Research and Extension

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2024 WEEK FOUR



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Add Intervals to Your Routine

Adding intervals to your activity routine can boost your fitness and your brain power. Intervals are short bursts of vigorous activity and they benefit anyone, regardless of age.

Interval training can jazz up your activity routine and keep it interesting and fresh. The more vigorous the activity, the more calories you burn, so it makes sense that interval training aids in weight loss. Another benefit is improved cardiovascular fitness, as your heart becomes more efficient and pumps more blood. It can also help lower blood pressure, as blood vessels expand and become more flexible to allow for increased blood flow.

You can include interval training in your physical activity routine at many levels, and it doesn't require special equipment. The key is to start at a level that is right for you and build from there. If walking is the activity you prefer, alternate with short bursts of brisk walking or jogging, depending on your fitness level. If you walk outdoors, you could walk faster between certain mailboxes, trees, or other landmarks. If you walk on a treadmill, leave the speed the same and increase the grade for short amounts of time – 30 seconds to 2 minutes – and back down again.

Always begin with a 5-minute warm-up. To add intervals, begin with just one or two intense activity bursts and work up from there. Listen to your body's cues to avoid injuries and sore muscles. Challenge yourself more as your stamina improves.

While most people can include interval training safely, it may not be appropriate for everyone. If you haven't exercised regularly, or have a chronic health condition, be sure to check with your physician before adding any type of interval training.

Stretch and Strengthen Your Hip Flexor

Hip flexors are a group of muscles that allow you to lift your knees toward your chest and to bend forward from the hips. Tight hip flexors are a common problem for people who spend a lot of time in a seated position. As a result of these muscles being tight, you could also have low back pain, hip pain, and injury. Simple hip strengthening and stretching exercises can keep these muscles from getting tight and can reduce your risk of injury and pain.

Hip Flexor Stretches

Seated Butterfly Stretch

This is a good stretch for your inner thighs, hips, and lower back. When doing this stretch, make sure you lean forward from your hips rather than rounding out your lower back.

1. Sit on the floor with your back straight, soles of your feet pressed together, and your knees dropped to the sides as far as they will comfortably go.
2. Tighten your abdominal muscles. Grasp your feet and ankles and slowly lean forward, keeping your spine straight. Hold this pose for 10 to 30 seconds.

To reduce stress on your knees, move your feet away from your body. To increase the stretch, move your feet toward your body.

Here is a demonstration of the Butterfly Stretch.

<http://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/exercise/videos/stretches/seated-butterfly-stretch.php>

Standing Stretch

1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and toes forward.
2. Bend your right knee, and bring your right heel up toward your butt.
3. Hold your right foot with the right hand, and gently pull to point your knee toward the floor. You can hold on to a counter or chair with your left hand for balance.
4. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat on your other leg.

Look online for more hip flexor stretches to try. You should never ignore tight hips. To keep your hips functional and free of pain, stay active and include exercises that involve the hips and do hip-opening stretches regularly.

Habit Shift Challenge

Incorporate “exercise snacks” this week. These are brief stretches of vigorous activity that are not considered to be formal exercise. Snack on the stairs by walking briskly up a flight of stairs instead of taking the elevator. Do chair squats several times during your work day/while crafting/watching TV, to break up long periods of sitting. Snack with hand weights while you are on Zoom, reading, or watching a webinar. Think creatively – almost anywhere and anytime can be good for exercise snacking!



Walk Kansas Webinars

April 24: Habit Shift to Better Health

Time: 12:10 p.m.

Link to join or scan the QR code below:

<https://ksu.zoom.us/j/94021770836>



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Fruit and Veggie Power Couples

All food provides unique qualities and a collection of different nutrients with various benefits. Often, the greatest benefits are achieved from combining certain foods. Pairing some foods together can boost absorption of nutrients and function in your bodies.

Calcium and Vitamin D. These are a well-known pair with bone building power. Calcium also plays a role in heart, muscle, and nerve function, blood clotting, and more. Vitamin D contributes to immune support and cell growth and helps your body absorb calcium. Good sources of calcium include dairy, some leafy greens, canned fish, and many soy products. Vitamin D foods are more limited and include sardines and salmon, plus many foods fortified with vitamin D.

Fat and fat soluble vitamins. Vitamins A, D, E, and K are considered fat soluble, meaning they need fat to be absorbed, transported, and stored in our bodies. These vitamins support immune function, growth, development, wound healing, and more. Top brussels sprouts, asparagus, carrots, broccoli, spinach, or other dark leafy greens with a drizzle of olive oil (while cooking or before serving) for a power pairing. The avocado supplies both vitamin E and healthy fats.

Iron and Vitamin C. While meat, seafood, and poultry are good sources of iron, you can also get this important mineral from plant sources. Pairing vitamin C with iron-rich plant foods at the same meal will boost absorption of iron. Plant-based iron sources include leafy greens, beans, seeds, seaweed, certain nuts, and more.

Try adding fruit and nuts to mixed greens for a salad or blend a handful of strawberries into a spinach-packed smoothie. Add tomatoes to a lentil-based dish, scoop up chickpea hummus with slices of red bell pepper, or simply top iron-fortified cereal with berries.

Probiotics and prebiotics. Probiotics support gut function and are found in many fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, kombucha, sauerkraut, miso, and more. Probiotics have a sidekick known as prebiotics, which are dietary fibers that feed probiotics in the gut. Good sources of prebiotics include fiber rich foods like whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. This simple Breakfast Banana Split recipe combines probiotics and prebiotics.

Breakfast Banana Split

Makes 2 Servings

Ingredients:

- 2 bananas
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup fat-free Greek yogurt
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup strawberries, sliced
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup blueberries
- 2 teaspoons toasted oats or granola
- 2 teaspoons chopped nuts



Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Wash bananas, strawberries, and blueberries by gently rubbing under cold running water.
3. To make one banana split, peel banana and cut in half lengthwise. Place banana halves in a shallow bowl. Divide berries in half and use half for each banana split. Add a few berries to the bottom of the bowl, between banana slices. Top with $\frac{1}{3}$ cup Greek yogurt, sprinkle with remaining berries, and half of the toasted oats and chopped nuts. Prepare second banana split with the remaining ingredients. Serve immediately

Nutrition Information per serving:

Calories -220; Total Fat – 3g; (0g saturated fat, 0g trans fat); Carbohydrates - 42g; Protein – 10g; Fiber – 6g; Sodium – 30mg; Sugar – 25g.