

How Much Exercise Is Enough?

By Dieter Hogen

Getting more exercise is one of the most popular New Year's resolutions.

But after the resolution comes the hard part. Those who are serious about getting in shape often ask two basic questions: "What is the best kind of exercise for me?" And also, "How much exercise do I need to be healthy?"

For starters, whatever you do is good. Walking, strength work, yoga — really any type of physical activity — will benefit body and mind. If you are injured or have joint issues, low-impact exercises like biking or swimming is best.

But how much? Most health authorities are in general agreement that five 30-minute exercise sessions per week (2½ hours total) is about right and comes with great benefits.

Even more than that — up to five hours per week is better. However, one has to start first.

Even a Little Bit Helps

While flying back to the States from a trip to Africa and Europe recently, I watched an interesting documentary about an experiment from one of Germany's top research centers. It was about the health benefits of short exercise breaks for office workers. The scientists found that by simply getting up from their chair a few times a day and walking up and down the stairs for just a few minutes, workers could improve their blood sugar levels dramatically. They also had improved mental performance, less fatigue, and lower body fat.

A lot of people shy away from exercise because they believe they don't have the time. But the exciting

thing about the German research is that it shows that even a little bit of exercise is beneficial. Finding even just 10-15 minutes a day to do some kind of activity is a good start. Later you can add another 10-15 minutes, and you're on your way to dramatically improving your health.

Don't 'Play It By Ear'

All my experience and observation shows that the most important thing to get into an exercise program (once you made the decision to do it) is to find the right time to do it. Get into a routine, something that works for you, and don't question it. People who "play it by ear" inevitably fail because in real life there always is something else, right?

Some words of caution: It's better to exercise often and for short periods than less often for longer periods. In other words, do not become a "weekend warrior" and try to do those 2½ - 5 hours of weekly exercise in a single session every Saturday morning. You might end up doing yourself more harm than good.

Finding the Fun

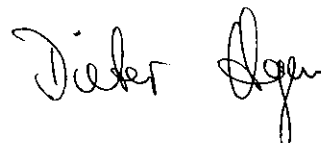
I am one of the lucky people who loves to exercise. Maybe it's because I grew up with it, or because it feels so good afterward, or perhaps for most of my life I just saw the fun in it.

The key may be having fun.

Long before I began working in the field of fitness and nutrition, exercise for me was just plain fun. And it still is today.

A couple weeks ago I had a comprehensive health check and it couldn't have been better. I had zero measurable inflammation, a resting heart rate of 38 (yes, this is extremely low, but not unusual for athletes), blood pressure of 115/75, ideal blood sugar, etc.

This can be you. Your body can change for the better at any age or fitness level. It might take a while, but if you do not try, you will never know. Just get out there and have fun.



A world-renowned nutrition expert and Olympic athletic coach, **Dieter Hogen** created a nutrition and training regimen in the 1990s that changed the elite athletes' training paradigm forever. Schooled at Potsdam University in Germany, Dieter brings his nutritional knowledge to Health Radar with one goal in mind: "To simply make you healthier and more energetic, no matter your age or current physical condition."

