



## Keep on moving to increase longevity

Our community is getting healthier. Four local schools are now Blue Zones approved, and the Collier County School Board has voted to expand the program to all schools in the district.

There are now 25 local entities that have taken the Blue Zones pledge and succeeded in reaching the Blue Zones approved status. I am proud to say that my office, Gulfshore Concierge Medicine, has recently become the first Blue Zones approved medical practice in Southwest Florida.

One of the Power 9 principles is "Move Naturally." According to Dan Buettner, founder of the Blue Zones initiative, "The world's longest-lived people don't pump iron, run marathons or join gyms. Instead, they live in environments that constantly nudge them into moving without thinking about it."

Our office has designated the farthest parking spots from our front door as the Blue Zones spots. We try to have daily and weekly meetings while standing and moving, rather than while seated at a table. We also encourage lunch time walks in the vicinity of the office.

But how helpful are these activities to improving health and increasing longevity? How much activity is needed daily or weekly to have an effect on our life expectancies? And how large can the effect be?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the parent agency of the National Institutes of Health, recommends that adults engage in regular aerobic physical activity for 2-and-a-half hours at moderate intensity or 1-and-a-quarter hours at vigorous intensity each week. Typically during moderate exercise, a person could talk but not sing. A classic example is walking at a 15- to 20-minute mile pace. Vigorous activities are those during which a person could not carry on a conversation, such as running, aerobic dancing or playing singles tennis.

Jerry Morris, a British epidemiologist was one of the first to study the effect of activity level on cardiovascular disease. His research in the 1940s and 1950s discovered that sedentary double-decker

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bus drivers had higher rates of cardiovascular diseases than conductors who climbed the steps regularly. He also found that mail carriers who delivered mail on foot had fewer heart attacks than men who had more sedentary jobs.

A 2012 study from the National Cancer Institute (part of the National Institutes of Health) comprised of more than 650,000 individuals found that brisk walking, up to 75 minutes per week, was associated with a 1.8-year life expectancy gain compared to those who do not walk in their leisure time. And brisk walking for 450-plus minutes per week was associated with an increased life expectancy of 4-and-a-half years.

One of the senior authors of this article, Dr. I-Min Lee, from Harvard

Brigham and Women's Hospital, has calculated that one "can expect a 1-to-7 return: Seven extra minutes of life gained for each minute of life spent exercising." She went on to say that "more strenuous exercise has almost double the effect."

A 15-year prospective Australian study of 8,662 subjects from 2013 demonstrated that increased physical activity could decrease the risk for heart disease by up to 65 percent, even when controlling for other variables, like obesity and diabetes.

Finally, a Cambridge University study of 334,000 people found that a lack of exercise was responsible for about twice as many deaths as obesity. In fact these researchers found that just 20 minutes of walking per day could lower the risk of premature death by about 33 percent.

In summary, evidence has been mounting for

almost 70 years about the benefits of being more active and exercising. We should all be evaluating our daily routines to find ways we can be more active while on the go and while performing our usual daily activities.

Furthermore, the "return on investment" measured in terms of time invested in exercise and increased gains in life expectancy can potentially be quite high. With this in mind, put on comfortable shoes and get moving.

**Be active and live longer.**

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