

BLUE TIP: “Begin by answering this question in a single, memorable sentence: Why do you get up in the morning?”

— Dan Buettner, *The Blue Zones, Second Edition: 9 Lessons for Living Longer From the People Who've Lived the Longest*

WOMEN WALK MORE THAN MEN BUT BOTH HAVE ROOM TO IMPROVE

‘Moving naturally’ is a Blue Zones principle that promotes longevity

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Who gets off their duff more for walks? Women and men are walking more to get around and for physical activity but data shows women may be maintaining the momentum better than men, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

Both men and women increased their walking habit by 8 percent over 10 years, from 2005 to 2015, yet men hit a standstill in the second half of the study period.

The data shows 54 percent of men reported taking walks in 2005 and the rate climbed to nearly 62 percent in 2010 and then stayed at that rate by 2015.

Among women, 57 percent were taking walks in 2005. The rate climbed to 62 percent five years later and then to 65 percent of women by the end of the 10-year period.

The difference between men and women is not huge but the CDC points to something else; a slowing down in improving physical activity. In addition, nearly one third of women and men report they did not walk for at least 10 minutes in the past week.

“Walking is an easy way for most adults to incorporate more physical activity into their daily routines,” the CDC said. “Women are less than men to achieve physical activity levels sufficient to meet guidelines. However, this study found that walking has become increasingly common among women since 2005, representing a potential opportunity for addressing the gender difference in overall physical activity.”

The CDC guidelines say that all adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate intense physical activity a week, or two hours and 30 minutes, or 75 minutes of vigorous intense aerobic activity.

The aerobic activity should be done in episode of at least 10 minutes and spread out during the week. Adult also should do muscle strengthening activity twice a week or more.

Communities can do a lot to promote walking by street and sidewalk designs that make it safer and more appealing, something that the former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murphy outlined in his 2015 report, “Step It Up! The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities.”

Walking dovetails into one of the principles of The Blue Zones Project that “moving naturally” helps with longevity.

Southwest Florida businesses, civic groups, government entities and other organizations are taking part in a campaign to improve the health and longevity of their populations by embracing the Blue Zones Project.

Former National Geographics explorer Dan Buettner developed the project based on his world



LUKE FRANKE/NAPLES DAILY NEWS
Pat Hohman, left, Elinor Hughes, center, and Lee Memorial Health Service Representative Blain Lindsey, right, chat as they walk through Coconut Point mall in Estero on National Walking Day, April 6, 2016.

travels and finding that people who lived to 100 or longer in various parts of the world shared lifestyle traits. He wrote a book, *The Blue Zones Project*, which became a New York Times best seller in 2010 outlining what he calls “the Power Nine” for longevity.

They include moving naturally by being physically active, knowing your purpose in life, taking time to relax, having a healthy social network and putting loved ones first.

Other principles include participating in a religious community, limiting alcohol consumption, eating a plant-slant diet and stopping to eat when you are 80 percent full.

Project consultants work with communities to identify strengths and gaps, and offers tools and resources so employers, schools, restaurants, grocery stores and other entities can take various steps to make healthier choices easier.

And walking in groups can build friendships, Deb Logan, executive director of the project in Southwest Florida, said.

“Many of us can probably remember when

walking to a friend’s house, a nearby store or playground was second nature,” Logan said. “We were exercising without thinking about it. Somewhere along the way, as communities have grown, there has been more emphasis placed on making these trips by car.” With growth and bigger roads, the gradual trend was to drive more often, to get where we wanted to go faster and for safety reasons, she said.

Walking fell out of favor and the hope is to reverse that when feasible, Logan said.

“This is why Blue Zones Project encourages community planners to build roads that are more inviting to walkers and cyclists,” she said. “Central Avenue in the City of Naples is an example of a street that has been designed to entice us enjoy it via walking or biking.”

The Blue Zones Project has 27 walking groups or “Moais,” a Japanese term for a social support group. So far, women outnumber men by four to one in the walking groups, she said. Anyone is invited to participate and can call the “Moai” coordinator, Chante Pemberton at 239-331-6068.