



Staying active — like walking your dog or strolling on the beach — is key to a longer, healthier life.

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Move it or lose it: Regular exercise key to a longer, healthy life



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If you engage in a regular exercise routine, keep up the great work!

However, the majority of us don't keep a regular routine when it comes to exercise. We all have good intentions, but somehow life gets in the way a bit too often.

In the original Blue Zones — the places around the world where people live longer, healthier lives — people tend to move naturally throughout their day. What does this mean?

In Sardinia for example, longevity experts determined many of the male centenarians had been shepherds, a profession that involved hiking throughout the day. Others in that community maintained their family gardens.

In Loma Linda, Seventh-day Adventists often prioritize nature walks with their families as a way of spending time together.

In Nicoya, Costa Rica, many don't have a car so they walk to work, to get groceries or to visit a friend.

The good news for us is that we don't have to live in an original Blue Zone community for examples of moving

naturally. Simply think back a couple of generations, before we had our modern-day conveniences. We didn't have electric garage doors and remote-control televisions. We had to get up and move just to complete a simple task.

Do you remember land line phones and having only one in the house? When it rang, you had to jump up and run to pick it up!

Many families did not own more than one car, so it meant traveling by foot or bike when the car was not available. More than 60 percent of us walked to school or took the school bus.

We made bread by kneading the dough and grew our vegetables in gardens we had to maintain. Mmm, and the food tasted better, didn't it?

These cumulative changes in daily movement have impacted our nation's overall health. We are not using our muscles as much and not burning as many calories.

To fight this, we are compelled to mitigate our loss of strength and fitness, as well as growing waistline, by going to the gym or adopting an exercise regimen. Yet, because only a small percentage of people stick to a regular fitness routine, this approach is failing most of us.

What's the alternative? Find ways to re-engineer natural movement into your day. Consider doing your own gar-

dening or yard work. Can you leave the car in the garage and walk or bike to your destination instead?

If you enjoy nature, why not take more walks on the beach or head to one of our local parks or greenways? Grab a friend or co-worker, and it adds to the fun.

Play more! Play with kids, grandkids and friends. Remember yard games like bocce, croquet and badminton? Or join a tennis or pickleball group.

Get a dog or volunteer to walk dogs at one of our local shelters. It's no surprise people who own a dog tend to walk on average 2½ hours more a week than those who don't.

And, if you prefer the type of exercise that gets you in the gym, set yourself up for success by finding an activity you really enjoy. In Collier County, maybe it's a fun-filled boot camp like Nino Magaddino of Max Flex Fitness offers, a yoga class at Love Yoga, a Zumba class at the NCH Wellness Center, or the individualized attention you get from Coach Rick at Think Outside the Diamond.

These are just a few of our partners participating in Blue Zones Project who understand the importance of helping you moving naturally.

Whatever motivates you to get moving, find what you enjoy and make it a habit!