

The Fitness Facts
By the American Institute for Cancer Research

Exercise brings many benefits. Active people tend to feel better and look better. Over a long period, regular physical activity can help prevent diseases like cancer, heart disease and diabetes. Test your exercise knowledge with this true-or-false quiz.

1. ___ Recommended levels of activity decrease for individuals as they age.
2. ___ A long, brisk walk each day is enough to stay healthy.
3. ___ If you have back pain or arthritis, it's best to relax and avoid moving painful body parts.
4. ___ Sports drinks are a good way to rehydrate when you work out.
5. ___ Even with a regular exercise routine, it is not possible for older adults to be as fit as young people.
6. ___ Before beginning an exercise program, you should consult your physician.
7. ___ You have to exercise in 30-minute intervals to get health benefits.

1. False. Recommendations do not vary by age. For protection against cancer and other ailments, everyone who can should aim for an hour total of moderate activity, like a brisk walk, a day and one hour of vigorous activity, like tennis, each week.
2. False. Walking is good aerobic exercise, which can improve the strength in your legs and endurance. But research indicates you need strength training and stretching to stay fit as well. Strength training can counteract and even reverse muscle and bone loss, while stretching can keep you limber.
3. False. Lower back pain and arthritis are common reasons for not exercising, but inactivity may actually worsen these problems. With an appropriate training program, people who suffer from these afflictions can become stronger, more flexible and suffer less. Swimming and water aerobics are good low-impact choices for people with these conditions.
4. True. In research, sports drinks were 90 percent more appealing than plain water. But water is the best hydrator, and does not have calories like some sports drinks. Drink liquids before, during and after working out.
5. False. If you stay physically fit, your body can perform as well as or even better than someone younger who is unfit. One study compared active men in their 50s to inactive men in their 20s. The older men had lower resting heart rates – 64 beats per minute versus 85 for the younger men.
6. True. Your physician can examine the state of your health and check for any limitations. A doctor or qualified physical trainer can also design a safe exercise program that maximizes the benefits for you. Health clubs, community centers and other organizations also can provide personalized training and classes.
7. False. A 10-minute interval is enough to obtain the benefits of exercising. For the recommended amount of daily moderate activity, you can do six 10-minute intervals of activity throughout the day. By dividing this time among aerobic, strength and stretching exercises, you should stay fit.

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