



“EN CORPS” physical health campaign

PHYSICAL EXERCISE – Benefits

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As part of the EN-CORPS campaign, I would like to talk to you about the health benefits of physical exercise. It's important to keep in mind that exercise is one of the best things we can do to improve our health. As everyone knows, exercise increases aerobic capacity, lowers blood pressure, regulates blood sugar levels, prevents type 2 diabetes, reduces the risk of osteoporosis and prevents cognitive decline, i.e., it delays the onset of dementia and can even help prevent it. Few actions have as many positive effects on health as does exercise!

As little as 15 minutes a day are required

How much exercise is needed to feel the benefits of exercise? The answer is "very little," contrary to what people think. In fact, people don't need to get a lot of exercise to reap its benefits. As little as 15 minutes of walking a day can reduce total mortality by about 15 %. The more you exercise, the greater the benefits, until you reach a plateau after the equivalent of 90 minutes of walking a day, or 1.5 hours, which is quite a lot. So, if you walk 15 minutes or more a day (or perform an activity equivalent to 15 minutes of walking a day), you'll reap many health benefits.

Split your exercise sessions for more flexibility

Something else to note is that exercise periods can be split up, contrary to what was previously thought. In fact, exercise need not be continuous, for instance, 15 minutes of walking can be divided into three 5-minute sessions, and you will still reap the benefits. If you want to run, thereby exercising more intensely, the duration can be shorter; the more intense the exercise, the shorter the exercise session needs to be. For example, one hour of walking is equivalent to 20 minutes of running.

Interval training, a method to learn about and try!

Finally, it's important to be familiar with a relatively new exercise type called "interval training." This training method was popularized by Olympic athletes many decades ago and is now used in the medical community. The idea is to alternate very intense and short periods of exercise with periods of rest. For example, if you're on a stationary bicycle, pedal 30 seconds at the top of your capacity, then stop pedaling for 30 seconds, and repeat this pattern for 10 to 15 minutes. This method is very effective. In fact, a study conducted here at the Montreal Heart Institute has shown that 16 minutes of interval training has been shown to be more effective than 30 minutes of continuous exercise. It's important to remember that during your 16 minutes of interval training, you are stopped half the time, since you alternate between periods of maximal effort and rest. You can do intervals of 30 seconds, one minute or two minutes. In general, people prefer short intervals (30 seconds to one minute, maximum).

When you have a very busy schedule, as is the case in the legal community, the main obstacle to physical exercise can be a lack of time. However, if you walk for 15 minutes or do interval training, you can easily fit a healthy exercise program into your routine!