



eat FOR YOUR FIRST 5K

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We all have heard about the heart benefits of exercise, but according to the Healthy North Dakota 2010 (2005) progress report, only about half of us actually get the recommended 30 minutes five times per week. Reasons behind the results vary, but for those who do get out and find activity, oftentimes they are seeking to improve or maintain their health, find a new challenge in their lives, or possibly find a means to improve good-quality time with family members.

EXERCISE HELPS YOUR BRAIN

A new study has shown that regular, nonstrenuous physical activity, such as walking, can reduce the risk for certain types of dementia, along with heart disease and other illnesses. A recent study involving 749 men and women aged 65 and older found that physical activity was associated with a decreased risk for dementia. Specifically, regular walking was associated with a 73 percent risk reduction for certain types of dementia.

The researchers have found that walking may overcome some of the lack of oxygen available to the brain that's often associated with aging due to closing blood vessels. Walking can be a great activity for conversation or family time together, plus it can improve physical health.

Although walking can be inclusive, challenging at a quick pace and fun, others have sought a more vigorous form of physical activity: running. 5K races are increasing in popularity at all ages. Never run a mile in your life? Doesn't matter. This writer started at age 35 and continues on at age 46, averaging five to six races per year.

Getting into a 5K program re-

quires not only increased physical activity (for example, running, walking, other forms of cross-training), but also changed eating habits, especially if you are carrying around a few extra pounds. The No. 1 cause of disability in the United States is osteoarthritis, and the No. 1 risk factor for this disease is being overweight. With extra weight, one must be especially cautious to prevent joint damage. Whatever your physical condition, a 5K program is available for you.

What just about everyone needs, though, is a new, good pair of running shoes; not cross trainers, running shoes. They generally have more padding meant for concrete and hard surfaces. Think of good shoes as a good set of tires to keep you on the road.

Next, you'll want to assess your current fitness. You may want to check with your family doctor if you think you are overweight before you even consider a program. If you are not sure if you are at a healthy weight, get an assessment from a personal trainer at the gym or from a licensed, registered dietitian. They will assess your body composition or body leanness/fatness to see if you are within normal

range (16 to 28 percent for women, 5 to 15 percent for men under age 55). Once you know your baseline information, you can establish one of three goals for your new fitness program: (1) lose weight while exercising, (2) maintain weight while exercising or (3) gain weight, or muscle, while exercising. With all three goals, 5K events are for you.

5K races are good for that person who needs a reason to stick to a program. You need not be competitive; runners who compete in 5Ks often are more “laid back” and just there to finish the race. Once you get to know your normal time, you can line up to run with those closest to your level (toward the front if your name is Usain Bolt or you run a race under 20 minutes; toward the back if you run a race in more than 30 minutes; in between, in the words of Forest Gump, well, you know, in between). Also, walking the entire race usually is acceptable. Fast walkers have been known to finish before some runners.

SPECIAL FOODS? SPECIAL DRINKS?

As a general rule of thumb, if we exercise for one hour or less, we don't need foods or drinks while exercising. In fact, having to stop for a drink may slow us down or even make us feel sluggish while trying to exercise. Exceptions include very hot, humid weather, but even then, races often are held with the sunrise to avoid dehydration issues. The use of “goos,” gels, special glucose beans and drinks is targeted toward those running longer distances and amounts of time, such as half marathons, “two-

a-days” (training twice in one day or running/biking/swimming all in one day) or training for greater than one hour per day. Stick to a well-balanced diet with plenty of water and other hydrating foods and beverages.

PROTEIN, CARBS AND FAT

No matter what your body composition or weight goals are, most people starting a new exercise program or stepping up their current exercise program need at least 1 gram (g) of protein per kilogram (kg) of body weight. This is easy to calculate: Find your weight in pounds and divide by 2.2. This is your weight in kilograms and also the number of grams of protein you need per day. The recommended daily allowance for protein (0.8 g protein per kg) is less than this, but the slight increase is due to wear and tear on muscles during training.

You also can use the kilogram formula to figure out how many grams of carbohydrate you need per day. In training (exercising for

an upcoming event or training to increase physical fitness), most people need 6 to 10 g of carbohydrate (CHO) per kg. When you are in the lower training ranges (for example, running one to two more miles more per day than normal for you), your number is probably about 6 g of CHO per kg. If you are training for a marathon and running up to 20 miles per day, you need closer to 10 g of CHO per kg (or even more).

Fat grams should make up the remainder of your calories. Fat calories should make up no more than one-third, or 30 percent, of overall calories; fat calories should make up at least 20 percent of overall calories.

If this is more information than you'd care to calculate every day, that is normal. These are just benchmarks. If you want to check every so often, simply enter your food intake using the user-friendly USDA Dietary Guidelines Web site, www.mypyramid.gov, and you can get an idea if you are close to your calorie, protein, carbohydrate and fat goals.

EXAMPLE OF DAILY INTAKE GUIDELINES:

Weight: 150 pounds ÷ 2.2 = 68 kg

Protein (g): 68 kg x 1g/kg = 68 g protein

Carbohydrate (g): 68 kg x 6 g/kg = 408 g carbohydrate

Calories from protein:

68 g protein x 4 calories/gram of protein = 272 calories

Calories from carbohydrate:

408 g carbohydrate x 4 calories/gram of carbohydrate = 1,632 calories

Total calories from protein and carbohydrate: 272 + 1,632 = 1,904

Fat: According to the USDA Dietary Food Guidelines, most individuals need about 5 teaspoons of fat per day. Keep your fat intake at moderate levels.