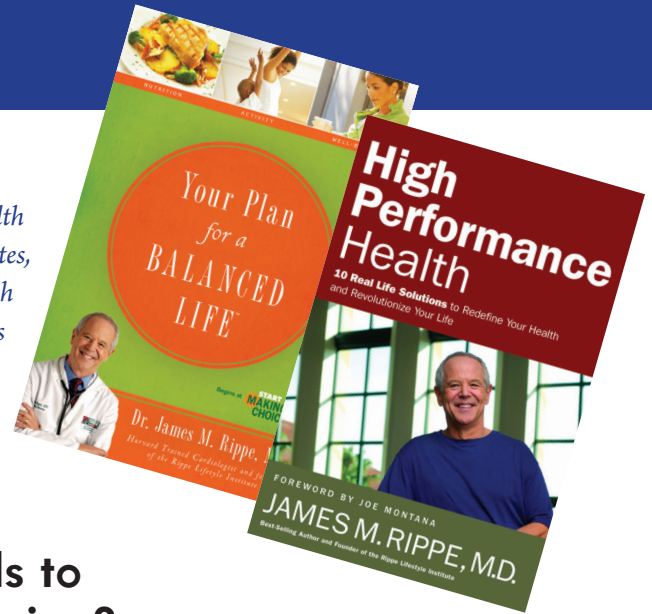


Ask DR. RIPPE

Medical Q & A



As a leading authority on preventive cardiology, health and fitness and healthy weight loss in the United States, Dr. Rippe has established and run the largest research organization in the world exploring how daily habits and actions impact short- and long-term health and quality of life.



Q: What Simple Secret Leads to Better Health and Well-Being?

Here's a riddle: What one practice can help you lose weight, increase energy, feel better everyday and lower your risk of chronic disease?

The answer: Regular physical activity. An active lifestyle is a healthy lifestyle; inactivity is hazardous to your health.

Almost everyone can be physically active. And there is almost no downside. Many scientific studies support the benefits of physical activity for multiple aspects of health. For example, an influential study conducted a few years ago by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) combined the results of 43 previous studies and compared the likelihood of developing heart disease in people who were physically active to those who were inactive. Inactive people doubled their risk of heart disease compared to active people.

By CDC criteria, to be physically active means accumulating 30 minutes of physical activity on most, if not all days. (As a practical matter, more than 3 days per week.) By this criteria, at least 60 percent of the adult population in the United States is "inactive." To put the study's findings in perspective, choosing to be inactive increases your risk of heart disease as much as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day. Sadly, there are six times as many physically inactive people than there are people who smoke a pack of cigarettes a day. Subsequent studies have supported similar findings for heart disease and other chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and some cancers.

Happily, it's not very hard to become more active. Just emphasize two key concepts: "accumulate" and "moderate."

"ACCUMULATE" and "MODERATE"

In my experience as a physician, many people have the wrong impression of how much activity they need to perform in order to achieve health benefits.

In 1995, the Expert Panel for the CDC and ACSM (on which I served) developed the following science-based recommendation for physical activity for adults. "Every U.S. adult should accumulate 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week." The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans built on this recommendation by defining the amount of activity as at least 150 minutes weekly. This amounts to about 30 minutes on at least five days weekly. Most health benefits occur with this level of activity, the committee found. Additional activity brings more benefits.

The key words in these recommendations are "accumulate" and "moderate." "Accumulate" means that you needn't get all 30 minutes of physical activity at one time. You can accumulate them over the day. For example, take your dog out for a walk in the morning. That's ten minutes. Take the stairs at work or park further away from the stores when you do your errands. That can easily add another 10 minutes. Take a walk with your spouse or a friend in the evening. That's your third 10 minutes. By looking for opportunities in the nooks and crannies of your life, you can easily accumulate 30 minutes of physical activity every day.

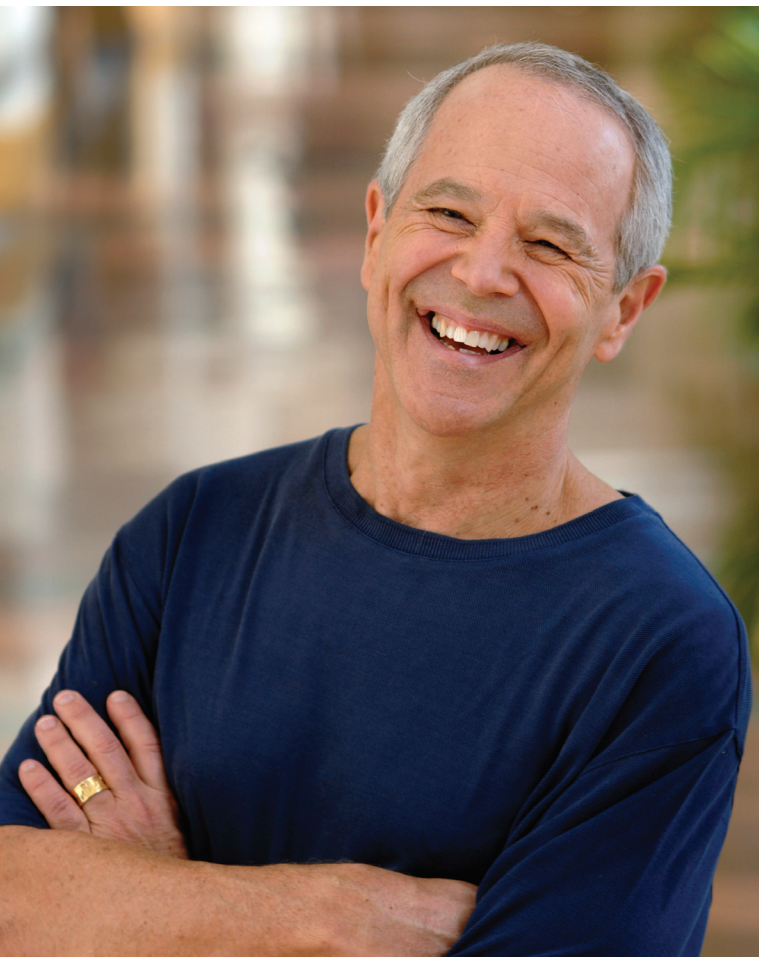
"Moderate" activity means between "easy" and "intense." During moderate activity, you should be able to carry on a conversation. It doesn't mean that you should be able to sing

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an aria, but you shouldn't be breathless. Many people begin by exercising too hard; as a result, they may incur soreness or injury and get discouraged and quit.

TO PUT MORE ACTIVITY INTO LIFE, START WITH A WALK

The easiest way for most people to increase physical activity is to start walking more, as my previous examples indicate. Walking requires only comfortable shoes and a commitment to do it. The venue is right outside your door (or down the hall or mall on a rainy day). If you've been inactive, start with a 10-minute walk once or twice a day. Add 2 to 5 minutes weekly until you reach a comfortable session for your schedule. If health conditions preclude walking, explore lower impact exercise such as cycling or the aquatic exercise offered by many health and community centers.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

As we start our work toward making Orlando the healthiest city in America, you can help by increasing your physical activity. We are blessed to live in a climate that allows year-round outside activities. Will you commit to accumulating 30 minutes of activity daily? That's one secret to good health.

Dr. Rippe is a board certified cardiologist, Professor of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Central Florida, Associate Professor of Medicine (Cardiology), Tufts University School of Medicine and Founder and Director of Rippe Lifestyle Institute and Rippe Health Evaluation. More information maybe obtained by visiting rippehealth.com, orlandohealth.com (click on Lifestyle Medicine Initiative) and lifestylemedicine@ucf.edu.

How Can Physical Activity Benefit Your Health?

Getting regular physical activity benefits health and well-being in many ways. Regular activity:

- Helps control weight
- Maintains lean muscle mass and metabolism
- Reduces the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke and heart disease
- Enhances bone strength
- Reduces stress and improves mood
- Boosts physical energy and endurance
- May improve cognitive function
- Helps improve functional fitness throughout your lifetime

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