**3 Keys to a Healthy Lifestyle**

**CARDIOVASCULAR FITNESS**

* **Cardiovascular fitness involves any activity that will give your muscles a greater capacity to take in oxygen. Cardio or aerobic training makes your muscles more fit. The heart is a muscle; so aerobic training has great benefits to the heart and to your overall health. Aerobic activities include running, riding a bike, swimming, rollerblading, and walking, just to name a few.**
* **The first step is to find an aerobic activity that you enjoy or can at least tolerate. You do not have to be at a gym. Yardwork, gardening, shooting baskets all work the heart.**
* **Start at a pace that you are comfortable with. Lifestyle adjustments are difficult. Small progressive changes have been proven to be most effective. If you do too much too early you might become physically or mentally fatigued and give up.**
* **Try and do a little more each session. If you are walking for 10 minutes, next session try 11 minutes. Keep steadily increasing your time until you can do 25-35 minutes.**
* Once you can consistently go for 25-35 minutes then it is time to work on your pace. If you are walking 2 miles in 30 minutes, next session try 2.1 miles in a half hour.
* **When you are comfortable with an aerobic routine, try something different. If you are walking try bike riding once or twice a week. This will shock your body and help burn calories more effectively. Changing your activities will also decrease over-use injuries.**
* **The key to a good cardiovascular routine is constant evolvement and challenge. This will decrease boredom and will help you to get the most out of each session.**
* **Many see an increase in endorphins and an upswing in mental health.**

**STRENGTH TRAINING**

* **Cardio for muscle fitness. Strength training for muscle strength.**
* **After age 30 our strength decreases. We can maintain and improve our strength with weight training. Incorporate a program targeting all the muscles in your body.**
* **Pairing the exercise with the muscle group is imperative for safety and effectiveness. This knowledge can be attained from a Personal Trainer, YouTube, literature or from an experienced weightlifter. This can be a challenging obstacle in creating a strength training program.**
* **When exercising a muscle, you should only feel resistance in the targeted muscle. Not joints, tendons or other muscles.**
* **Use a weight that you are comfortable with. Too much weight can lead to bringing other muscles, or worse, transfer joints or tendons into the exercise. When feeling a strain in the joints or tendons stop the exercise. These areas cannot be strengthened, only the muscles that surround them.**
* **Identify the muscle, adjust to feel it in the muscle, fatigue the muscle. The goal for each session should be to improve on feeling resistance in the targeted muscle area.**
* **Make slow controlled movements without the use of momentum or gravity. With proper form, risk of injury will decrease, and strength gains will increase.**
* **You should stay between the ranges of 8-15 repetitions. If you cannot do 8 lower the weight, when you start to do 15, you should increase the weight. This range can vary due to workout goals. If you are looking to increase girth and/or strength go to the low end of this range. For toning go to the higher end of this range.**
* **Muscles that are strength trained need at least one full day’s rest. Some will do upper body then lower body the next day.**
* **Exhale when applying force. When you are returning to a natural position inhale. It is important to breath when working-out. The muscles need oxygen and when exerting force it is dangerous to hold your breath.**

**FLEXIBILITY**

* **Cardio for muscle fitness, strength training for muscle strength, stretching for muscle flexibility.**
* **Make sure the muscles are warm before stretching. Muscles are more pliable when they are warm. Stretching cold muscles could lead to injury. The most effective time to stretch is after a workout.**
* **Like weightlifting, it is important to make sure you feel a stretch only in the targeted muscle area.**
* **Once you feel a stretch in the targeted area hold for 30-35 seconds. Unless you are an advanced athlete, it is not necessary to bounce, this can lead to injury.**

**QUICK TIPS**

* **Progress at a slow pace. At times people get motivated and they try and do too much too soon. This can lead to injuries, physical fatigue and mental fatigue. Start at a comfortable pace and progress slowly. Prepare a fitness regimen that can be sustained for a lifetime.**
* **Some early benefits will be increased energy throughout the day, improvement in sleep, feeling stronger doing day to day activities and enhanced mental health.**
* **The goal is good health. Stick with a fitness program, follow these guidelines and eventually you will see results. Be patient, changing ones habits can be a long and demanding process.**
* **Your level of sacrifice is in direct correlation with the benefits you receive from exercise. There are no shortcuts. Dedication and hard work is the shortest route to attaining good health.**
* **The mind is part of the body. Your level of physical health has a large impact on your mental health.**
* **You are an individual. Format a routine that fits and works for you. Be leery of diets or exercise routines geared to the masses.**
* **Humans form habits. This is a good habit to have. Vary your routine and keep challenging yourself. This will keep you interested and motivated.**