



Find Balance in Your Recreation

CHALLENGE
Balance sedentary recreation with physical activity.

Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read “Being sedentary damages your health,” and “Get active with family and friends.”
2. To complete the Challenge, limit your computer and TV time to 1 hour on weekdays (no more than 2 hours on weekends) and spend time in outdoor activity on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

What is recreation?

Many pursuits could be considered refreshing or relaxing: playing badminton, watching television, walking in a park, swimming, reading a book, gardening, or even napping. But some recreational activities promote health more than others.

One of the best ways to improve your health is to be physically active every day. It can improve health and reduce the risk of premature death in the following ways:

- Reduces the risk of heart attack and stroke
- Helps people achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduce the risk of diabetes
- Reduces the risk of cancer
- Helps you relax
- Reduces depression and anxiety
- Improves your mood
- Increases your life expectancy

On average, every hour you spend exercising increases your life expectancy by 2 hours.

Local park and recreation users report fewer visits to a physician for purposes other than checkups than did non park users.¹

Being sedentary damages your health!

A new study has found that – even if you exercise regularly – spending a lot of time being sedentary, for example, watching TV or using the Internet, can increase your risk for serious health problems.

The study included about 2,000 women and 2,000 men who were physically active at least 2.5 hours a week (30 minutes, 5 days per week). None of them had diabetes or heart disease. Researchers compared the number of hours spent watching television each day to the prevalence of metabolic risk factors and found that:

Every time sedentary people walk a mile, they add 21 minutes to their life.²

In both men and women, as the hours of daily TV viewing increased, so did their:

- Waist circumference (indicating increased abdominal fat)
- Systolic blood pressure, and
- Blood glucose (blood sugar) levels.



Women also saw an increase in:

- Blood triglyceride levels, and
- Blood HDL cholesterol levels.

Each of these conditions greatly increases the risk of heart disease – and the only apparent cause was spending time in front of a television or computer screen! These negative effects were seen after just 2 hours of screen time for men and in just 1 hour of screen time for women.

There’s another reason for limiting screen time. According to a continuing study that began in 1975, teens and young adults who watched television for more than 7 hours a week had an increased chance (up to 200%) of committing an aggressive act in later years.³

For best physical, emotional, and social health, get regular exercise AND limit screen time to 1 hour on weekdays – no more than 2 hours on weekends. (A 1-hour limit is best for women.)

If you just have to watch a favorite, lengthy movie or football game, here is a way to beat the system. Bring your stationary bicycle or a treadmill to the TV, and put in some active miles while watching.

Get active with family and friends

Spending time with family and friends outside is a great way to be physically active. It will also bring you closer together as friends, as a couple, or as a family. Participating in activities together helps develop loyalty, trust, cohesiveness, and caring for each other. Spending active time with family and friends – vacations, family reunions, weekend outings, and daily habits – creates happy memories, models healthy behaviors, and contributes to a positive self-image.

Here are some easy and inexpensive ideas to get yourself and your family up and moving:

- Take your pet for a walk.
- Let a family member plan a walking tour around your neighborhood, and serve as guide.
- Organize a walkathon with your school, club, church, or in your neighborhood. Donate the proceeds to your favorite charity.
- Learn a new sport together, like badminton, or rock climbing.
- Declare one day a month to be major power-cleaning day. Scrub the walls, wash the windows, and clean the gutters.
- Do yard work for an elderly or ill friend or neighbor.
- Walk (or skip) to the grocery store or library as a family.
- Go on an active vacation: kayak around Florida or the San Juan Islands, backpack the Appalachian or Pacific Crest Trails, take a walking tour of Boston or San Francisco, or hike through Yosemite.
- When you've planned an active vacation, work together to get in shape for it!

- Invite grandparents to teach you how to jitterbug or waltz.
- Plant a garden – and maintain it!
- Pick a family member to be “coach of the day.” He or she can choose what game the family will play (perhaps kickball, hide-and-seek, or hopscotch). The coach of the day could even make up a game – complete with rules.
- Gather or chop wood. End a day of splitting and stacking in front of a crackling fire, singing your favorite songs.
- Dress in bathing suits and wash the car – and expect a water fight!
- Go to a park once a week to roller blade, play volleyball, bike ride (remember to wear your helmets), swim, or hike.
- When you have your family reunion, include physical activities that everyone can enjoy: Frisbee golf, old-fashioned sack or wheelbarrow races, or softball – and remember safety gear!
- Teach your kids some games you liked when you were their ages (like capture the flag, Twister™, Hula Hoop®, or limbo).
- Play a friendly game of soccer or volleyball.
- Enter community parades and do something active along the route.

Work on getting a Presidential Sports Award. This program encourages all Americans to make being active part of their everyday lives – children, teens, adults, and seniors – and emphasizes regular exercise rather than outstanding performance. Learn more at: www.fitness.gov/home_pres_chall.htm

Visit public parks

You can walk around your neighborhood. But it's probably more enjoyable to walk through a beautiful city park or backpack through a national forest. Try it for yourself to experience a unique blend of peacefulness and exhilaration that comes from spending active time outdoors.

According to the National Recreation and Park Association, surveys have found that having a park close to where you live or work is one of the most important factors in determining whether you will become active and stay that way. Besides encouraging social interaction and physical activity, spending time in a park simply makes you feel good.

Recreational programs offered by parks provide organized, structured, enjoyable activities for all ages. From sports and dance to crafts and outdoor concerts – you can find it at a public park.

Find recreational opportunities anywhere in the United States:

www.recreation.gov

- Create a home video of exercise routines, square dancing, or basketball moves.
- Learn T'ai Chi, Tae Kwon Do, Pilates, or other exercise routines.
- Help your kids design and build an obstacle course, using whatever supplies you have on hand, for example: cardboard boxes, chairs, tables, rope, sheets, or buckets.

If you're concerned about your health – for you or a family member – turn off the television and the computer games, and make physical activity a family affair. Come up with a list of fun physical activities, and then get going!

Sources:

1. Ho C-H, Payne L, and Orsega E. *Parks, Recreation and Public Health*. April 2003.
2. O'Sullivan E. *Repositioning Parks and Recreation as Essential to Well-Being*. *Parks & Recreation Magazine*. 2001;36(10):89-94.
3. Kolata G. *TV linked to aggression among teens, youth*. *The Sacramento Bee*. March 29, 2002. pp.A7.
4. Healy GN, et al. *Television time and continuous metabolic risk in physically active adults*, *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* 2008;40(4):639-645.
5. *The Health and Social Benefits of Recreation*. State of California Resources Agency. 2005.
6. Dolesh RJ, Vinluan MH, and Phillips M. *Top 10 Reasons Parks Are Important*. National Recreation and Park Association. 2008.





Find Balance in Your Recreation

Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. At the end of the month, total the number of days you limited your computer and TV time to 1 hour on weekdays (no more than 2 hours on weekends). You must spend time in physical activities at least 22 days during the month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this practice for a lifetime of good health and wellbeing.
3. Turn in your Health Challenge™ form if requested, or enter your completion of this Challenge on the Health Activity Tracker report for the month, if applicable. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

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MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____		
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_____ Number of days this month I balanced sedentary recreation with physical activity

_____ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____

