



Walk Kansas

a fitness challenge

K-State Research and Extension

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In This Issue

Improve Your Walking Workout

Laughter is Good Medicine

Berries – More than Pretty Colors

Recipe: Berry Custard Brûlée

Coming Next Week

Action Plans Can Keep You Going

A Decade of Walk Kansas in 2011

Warm Weather Exercise

Keep Food Safe when Dining Outdoors

Recipe: Grilled Rosemary
Pork Tenderloin

Calendar

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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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Improve Your Walking Workout

Nordic walking, sometimes called ski walking, is a technique that uses two specially designed poles to work the upper body. Try this technique as a variation of your routine to challenge yourself more, improve overall fitness, and avoid boredom.

One great benefit of Nordic walking: It burns up to 40 percent more calories per mile, but participants report feeling no more sense of exertion than with regular walking. Nordic walkers use more of the body, including the upper body, so they increase overall strength and endurance in core muscles.

Using poles or walking sticks improves balance and stability, and relieves strain on knees, hips, and ankles. You can increase your stride length and walking speed by using the Nordic walking technique and will notice greater ease in climbing hills.

Nordic walking helps loosen tight neck and shoulder muscles. The motion is good for people who tend to hunch forward while working at desks or computers, reading, or watching television.

Walking poles come in a variety of styles, so consider how you will use them. Lightweight poles are generally best. Typically, they

continued on page 2



Improve Your Walking Workout

continued from page 1

are made from high-grade aluminum or carbon fiber, which are the lightest materials. Some walking poles have adjustable sections, so choose a mechanism that works best for you. Select a pole that adjusts to a suitable height, and make sure the pole grips and wrist straps – if included – are comfortable.

The technique for Nordic walking is similar to that for cross-country skiing, and is really just an enhancement of your normal arm swing when walking. Start with poles behind and pointing diagonally backward. Keep your shoulders relaxed and down, holding poles close to your body. Step forward with the left foot, swing the right pole forward, and plant it on the ground – roughly even with the heel of the left foot. The foot rolls through the step to push off with the toe, lengthening the stride behind the body. Keep your arms relaxed and poles behind or even with your body. Written instructions and sometimes a DVD are included with walking poles. Or you can search for more information on the Internet.



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2010 Evaluation

Please tell us about your Walk Kansas experience this year and provide suggestions to help us improve the program for our 10th anniversary year in 2011.

We appreciate your success stories and pictures, so forward those to your local K-State Research and Extension office, along with your evaluation response.

Laughter is Good Medicine

Humor is priceless medicine that is fun, free, and easy to use. Humor is far more contagious than a cough or virus, and when people share laughter, it binds them together and increases happiness. Laughter also triggers healthy physical changes in your body that strengthen your immune system. It is a powerful antidote to stress, pain, and conflict.

Laughter is good for your health because it relaxes your whole body. The benefits of a good, hearty laugh can linger for up to 45 minutes. Humor can help you shift your perspective, allowing you to see situations in a



more realistic and less threatening light. It even provides pain relief, as laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural "feel good" chemicals.

Your heart benefits from a good laugh: Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, adding protection

against heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

Nothing works faster than a good laugh to bring mind and body back into balance. Humor inspires teamwork, enhances relationships, keeps you grounded, and connects you to others.

Shared laughter is even more powerful than laughing alone. You can learn to laugh at any stage in life – all it takes is a willingness to risk some loss of control. If you are timid, start with a few giggles. More courageous? Go for a good belly laugh – even snorting. Whatever your style, enjoy a good laugh because it is good for your health!

Berries – More than Pretty Colors

It is time to enjoy fresh berries! While the blue and red hues of berries are beautiful, the fruits are so much more than pretty colors: They represent some of the best nutritional bargains around.

Berries are low in fat, carbohydrates, and calories, but they are rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Berries contain phytochemicals and flavonoids that help prevent some forms of cancer and heart disease, while they contribute to slowing the aging process. Cranberries and blueberries contain a substance that may prevent bladder infections. Blueberries and raspberries also contain lutein, which is important for healthy vision.

Folk advice tells us to eat our fruits and vegetables – and science has caught up with common sense. A study in the United Kingdom investigated participants' eating habits and outcomes. The research showed that the more fruits and vegetables people ate, the better their overall health. Even if they smoked or had illnesses – the results were still positive. Adding one cup of fruits and vegetables a day improved the odds of having good functional health by 11 percent.

Summer is the time to enjoy fresh berries. Look for berries that are ripe, colorful, and firm, with no mushy spots or signs of mold. The freshest berries are usually found at farmers markets, where the produce often was harvested earlier that day. Or find a berry farm where you can pick your own fruit – a great family outing.

Most berries are sweet enough to serve just as they are. You can also enjoy them combined with bananas and low-fat milk in a smoothie, added to a bowl of whole-grain cereal, or stirred into vanilla yogurt. Berries are great sprinkled on a salad or blended into a salad dressing, as a topping for pancakes and waffles, and served as a dessert.

Did you know?

Phytochemicals are chemical compounds that occur naturally in plants and have protective or disease-preventive properties.

There are more than a thousand known phytochemicals, such as the lycopene in tomatoes and flavonoids in fruits. A plant produces these chemicals to protect itself, and recent research demonstrates that phytochemicals can protect humans against disease.

Berry Custard Brûlée

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients:

¼ cup sugar, divided	½ teaspoon vanilla
2 teaspoons cornstarch	3 cups fresh berries, such as strawberries (halved), raspberries, blackberries, or blueberries
1 cup fat-free milk	
1 egg, beaten	
2 tablespoons light dairy sour cream	

Directions:

- 1) To prepare the custard, combine 2 tablespoons of the sugar and the cornstarch in a small saucepan. Add milk and beaten egg. Cook and stir with a wooden spoon over medium heat just until mixture begins to bubble. Immediately pour the mixture into a small bowl and let it cool about 5 minutes. Whisk sour cream into custard and add vanilla. Cover and chill custard up to 24 hours.
- 2) To serve, divide berries evenly among four dessert dishes. Spoon chilled custard over berries.
- 3) **Topping** (optional): Heat remaining 2 tablespoons sugar in a small, heavy saucepan over medium-high heat until sugar begins to melt, shaking pan occasionally to heat evenly. Reduce heat to low, and cook sugar until melted and golden, stirring mixture occasionally with a wooden spoon. Immediately drizzle caramelized sugar over each dish and serve.

Nutrition Information per Serving:

Calories – 148; Fat – 3g; Carbohydrate – 27g; Fiber – 6g; Protein – 5g; Sodium – 50mg

