

Walk Kansas

celebrate healthy living

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This newsletter developed by Sharolyn Flaming Jackson, Extension Specialist – Family and Consumer Sciences, K-State Research and Extension.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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Posture Power

Have you checked your posture lately? When you practice good posture, you will appear more confident, and it can make you look up to 10 pounds thinner — instantly. You also feel better when you apply good posture because you carry yourself better, relieving tension throughout your body.

Stress can have a negative effect on posture. You lose focus during times of stress, and it is easy to fall into poor posture habits. Sitting incorrectly or standing for long periods of time, holding a baby on one hip, standing at the counter when working in the kitchen, being hunched over in front of a computer screen, working on projects in awkward positions, etc. — all can bring on muscle tension. Before you know it, your posture is out of whack.

When you practice healthy posture your spine is strong and stable, and you naturally use your muscles correctly. Good posture helps maintain natural curves in your spine. Poor posture does the opposite, which can stress and pull muscles. Here are tips for good posture when sitting and standing.

Sitting Posture:

- Rest both feet flat on the floor; keep your knees level with your hips.
- Don't cross your legs.
- Sit back in your chair and adjust the backrest to support your lower back's curve.

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Posture Power

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- Relax your neck and shoulders, and keep your forearms parallel to the ground.
- Try not to sit in the same position for a long time.

Standing Posture:

- Stand with your feet about shoulder-width apart.
- Tighten and tuck in your stomach.
- Stand straight and tall, shoulders back and relaxed.
- Let your arms hang naturally at your sides.
- Balance weight evenly on both feet; don't lock your knees.
- If standing for a long time, shift your weight from your toes to your heels.
- Keep your head level.

When sitting or standing, take a break for several minutes every hour and move a little. Work different muscles by rolling shoulders back, moving arms backward, and working the muscles of your back to relieve tension. Deep breathing, where you breathe through your belly rather than your chest, will also help you relax.

While good posture should be natural, it might not feel that way at first, especially if you have forgotten the sensation of sitting and standing up straight. Exercises that stretch and strengthen your core will help. You can improve your posture at any age with a little practice.

To learn more about the hazards of sitting too much and how to sit with good posture, go to: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/health/sitting/Sitting.pdf>.

Boost Your Activity with Interval Training

- People of all ages and fitness levels can benefit from interval training, which is simply alternating short bursts of intense activity with lighter activity. In fact, interval training can be better for overall health than slow, sustained exercise.
- Life is like interval training. You work and then you rest, and so on. You can include interval training in your physical activity routine at many levels, and it doesn't require special equipment.
- The key is to start at a level that is right for you and build from there. If walking is the activity you prefer, alternate with bursts of fast walking. If walking on a treadmill, increase the speed or increase the grade for short amounts of time — 30 seconds to 2 minutes and back down again.
- Interval training can jazz up your activity routine and keep it interesting and fresh. The more vigorous the activity, the more calories you burn,

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Why Greek Yogurt?

Greek yogurt ranks as one of the hottest-growing food categories, according to a report by UBS, a global financial service company. One reason for this popularity is its consistency, which is thicker and creamier than regular yogurt. Health experts recommend Greek yogurt as a healthy substitute for butter, cream cheese, and sour cream.

Both Greek and regular yogurt, in their plain, nonfat, or low-fat forms, can be part of a healthy diet. Greek yogurt contains more protein, which will keep you feeling full longer, and it contains fewer carbohydrates than regular yogurt.

If you choose traditional or Greek, keep in mind the sweetened varieties appeal to most people, and these can contain high amounts of sugar. Fat content also varies from one brand to another, so make it a habit to read Nutrition Facts labels.

For a refreshing treat, make Yogurt Dipped Blueberry Bites. Start with nonfat vanilla Greek yogurt and

rinsed, fresh blueberries. Using a toothpick, stick a blueberry, then dip and swirl it in the yogurt. Drop the dipped berry on a cookie sheet. Repeat to make as many "bites" as you want. Place dipped berries in the freezer for at least one hour. Pop frozen "bites" off the cookie sheet and place them in a plastic bag or container. Store these in the freezer and enjoy whenever you want a cold, creamy, juicy — and healthy — treat!



Boost Your Activity with Interval Training

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so it makes sense that interval training aids in weight loss. Another benefit is improved cardiovascular fitness, which will allow you to cover a specific distance in less time.

While most people can include interval training safely, it isn't appropriate for everyone. If you haven't been exercising regularly or you have a chronic health condition, be sure to check with your physician before adding interval training. As with any activity, you should begin with a 5-minute

warm-up, such as walking at a slower pace and light stretching. Add just one or two intense activity bursts at first. Listen to cues your body gives you to avoid injuries and sore muscles. Challenge yourself more as your stamina improves and always include cool-down time at the end of any activity.

This video demonstrates how interval training can make you strong and leads you through a 15-minute workout that you can do in your own home:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLEVVzbwnQI>

Hydrate for Energy

If you often feel fatigued, have a low energy level, or find it difficult to think clearly, you may be experiencing mild dehydration. Fatigue and dehydration are the main reasons those who exercise regularly lose focus and quit being active. If your body is not adequately hydrated, you may need a longer time to recover from exercise, may experience more muscle soreness, and will likely feel less motivated to be physically active.

If you start drinking water only when you become thirsty, it may already be too late to avoid dehydration. The sensation for thirst doesn't kick in until you are 1 or 2 percent dehydrated, which affects the way your body and mind perform. Dehydration affects everyone. It is equally important for those who work in an office all day to stay hydrated as it is for an athlete.

Water is the beverage of choice for proper hydration. If you will drink more of a flavored beverage, then you are better off with whatever helps you get more fluid throughout the day. Choose calorie-free or low-calorie drinks. If plain water is not your preference, try adding fruit for a flavor boost.

In addition to drinking more, consume foods that naturally contain water. These include cucumbers, lettuce, spinach, celery, radishes, carrots, broccoli, tomatoes, sweet peppers, cauliflower, watermelon, strawberries, oranges, grapefruit, cantaloupe, low-fat milk, and yogurt.

This recipe for Strawberry Pineapple Salsa encourages you to eat your water. Serve it as an appetizer or snack with whole wheat crackers or pita chips (<http://www.walkkansas.org/~/doc15443.ashx>), or as a flavorful side for fish and chicken.

Strawberry Pineapple Salsa

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 Roma tomato, diced
- ½ pound strawberries, hulled and diced
- 1 cup diced pineapple
- ¼ cup diced red onion
- 1 tablespoon seeded and chopped jalapeno pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 lime, juiced
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Combine ingredients.
2. Keep in refrigerator up to 3 days.

Nutrition Information per serving: 50 calories; 0 g fat; 13 g carbohydrates; 1 g protein; 3 g fiber; 0 mg sodium.

