

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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“ Exercise: How Much is enough ?”

Exercise has repeatedly been shown to have a wide spectrum of health benefits. Exercise has been shown to decrease the risk of most major diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, strokes, obesity and diabetes. But, just how much is enough to maintain or improve your overall health? Many health experts recommend 150 minutes of moderately intense activity per week. Some authors have even considered housework to be adequate but the BMC Public Health study, which surveyed over 4,500 adults, found those who counted housework were heavier than those who did other activities. They found that house work and DIY (do it yourself activity) are not strenuous enough to count towards the 150 minute weekly target. Prof Marie Murphy said, "Either people are overestimating the amount of moderate intensity physical activity they do through housework, or are eating too much to compensate for the amount of activity undertaken." People who get the 150 minutes of weekly exercise or more may live for up to several years longer than those who do not. Exercise provides the participant with immediate and long term health benefits. You do not have to participate in sports or go to the gym but any activity is better than no activity. It seems that the only activities that count are those that increase your heart rate, speed up breathing and which make you feel physically warmer. Yet, experts seem baffled as to the underlying explanation for the improved health and increased longevity linked to exercise and suggest it is related to genetic and lifestyle factors and the wealth and status that comes with sporting success. Surprisingly, they overlook the obvious benefits of increased oxygen intake associated with exercise. I have no doubt that increased oxygen uptake is responsible for the salutary results. I believe this is the reason that such a wide variety of activities and exercise regimens can produce the same beneficial results. Oxygen consumption increases up to 20 times during exercise, resulting in increased oxygen to most organs and tissues of the body. Each episode of exercise is equivalent to a substantial dose of oxygen and its subsequent metabolic products, which protect you and I from bacteria, fungi, viruses, protozoans and cancer. Please check out my book entitled, "Sports, Athletes, Exercise and Antioxidant Myths" available at www.amazon.com. Many athletes are actually working against themselves by overdosing on antioxidants.

In the America that I love, we realize that over 60% of athletes use common antioxidant vitamin supplements because athletes, coaches, trainers, sports doctors and dieticians have been misled to believe that antioxidants will give the athlete an edge over their competitors. Don't rely on "pills" and meet your weekly exercise requirements. Yes, you can do it.

Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

Surgeon/Scientist/Patient Advocate

27439 Highway 441, Kentwood, LA 70444

985-229-6955 Home | 985-229-3760 – Fax | 985-514-0578 – Cell

rhowesmd@hughes.net | www.iwillfindthecure.org

