Step Up. Step Out!

Secret to Better Health and Weight Loss: Regular Exercise

If you’re serious about getting fit and losing weight this year, consider this advice from health experts: Exercise builds a healthier body while getting rid of excess fat, by increasing your body’s metabolic rate to help you burn more calories throughout the day.

Judy Tyll is a retired nurse, consummate community volunteer and a spokeswoman for Step Up. Step Out!, a research program that is helping women in Sumter County make exercise a priority. Sponsored by the University of South Carolina’s Prevention Research Center with help from the Sumter County Active Lifestyles Coalition and the Sumter County Recreation and Parks Department, the program encourages women in Sumter County aged 35 – 54 to exercise regularly, on their own.

An avid runner until arthritis sidelined her twenty years ago, Judy now walks regularly. She’s found that walking helps her maintain her weight, improves her self-confidence, and eases her arthritis pain. “Exercising is a pleasure for me,” she says. “I love being outside and walking makes me feel good. If I’m down or stressed, walking also relieves that.”

Judy walks 45 minutes to an hour every day, usually with her Labrador Retriever Big Al at her side. As a former nurse, she knows that in addition to controlling her weight, she is also preventing many of the chronic health conditions she saw during her nursing days. “There are many things we can do to prevent long term health problems when we gain control of our bodies, such as hypertension and diabetes, and particularly when we bring our weight under control.”

But Judy understands why many women put exercise last on their “to do” lists. “Women are so busy taking care of everyone else, we don’t always take care of ourselves,” she says. “We have to decide we’re worth the time and effort it takes to exercise every day.”

Judy says many women tell her they’re too tired to exercise; that they just don’t have the energy or they’re afraid working out will wear them out. “I tell them they won’t believe how much more energy they’ll have once they start exercising regularly,” she says. “Exercise enriches lives. It relieves stress and increases energy levels, and that’s something women need to hear.”

Judy has more encouragement and advice for Step Up. Step Out! participants. Use her tips to enrich your life.

• You’re worth it. Make the decision that you’re worth the time and effort it takes to exercise. Then make the commitment.

• Support is important. Enlist a friend to encourage you to exercise.

• Your pet is good for you. Take your dog for a walk every day. The exercise and the bonding is good for both of you.

• Be patient with yourself. It takes time to turn bad habits into good ones.

• Don’t overdo. If you have chronic health problems, talk with your doctor before beginning your exercise program. But get started and stick with it.

• Be consistent. It’s important to do at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise at least five days a week, if you want to receive the full health benefits.

To learn more about Step Up. Step Out! please call Ericka Burroughs, Project Coordinator at 436-2182.