



Physical Activity – Redefining Exercise

The Dow Retiree Health Empowerment Program for 2008 will focus on physical activity and its positive effect on both preventing and managing health problems. We will be encouraging you to become more physically active as individuals and as groups, using the President's Challenge as the framework for our year-long physical activity challenge.

The retiree survey revealed that more than half of Dow/UCC retirees participate in regular cardiovascular exercise (e.g., walking, biking, swimming) at least three times per week; however, two-thirds do no strengthening activities. Meanwhile, personal physical limitations keep almost 20 percent of retirees from being physically active, and 10 percent experience limited mobility because of poor physical conditioning (endurance, strength, flexibility).

To address these issues, this quarter we are looking at the ABC's of Redefining Exercise: Adapting, Broadening, and Creating. In this issue, we will look at **Broadening**.

Broadening Your Scope of Activity

Most adults, particularly older adults, are aware of the benefits of cardiovascular exercise, also known as aerobic or endurance exercise. A majority of Dow/UCC retirees report that this type of exercise is a regular part of their lifestyle.

What about Strength?

By contrast, most of Dow/UCC retirees don't do anything to improve their muscular strength and endurance. This is not surprising; nationwide, less than 15% of older adults engage in strength-building activities. In fact, **only 25% of older adults that are categorized as physically active** (30+ minutes, 5 days/week of moderate intensity activity) **engage in any type of strength training!**

Strength training (also called resistance training) improves bone density and glucose metabolism, and reduces the risks for falls and fractures. Adequate muscle strength and endurance are essential to being able to live independently! *Coming in April – more information and tips on practical, effective resistance training.*

What about Flexibility?

Flexibility, the ability to move your joints fully, is likely the most neglected part of everyone's exercise program. And yet, poor flexibility makes taking care of yourself more difficult, and increases the risk of falling. *Coming in May – more information and tips on making flexibility training part of your lifestyle.*

This month consider what opportunities you have to broaden your definition of exercise – and how, by doing so, you can experience greater benefits from physical activity and even have a little more fun! If you have examples of how you've redefined exercise for yourself, please share your stories with others and with us – LSosebee@dow.com.

To learn more about Exercise and Older adults, visit this website: nihseniorhealth.gov/exercise/toc.html.

Important Note! Consult your physician before starting an exercise program and/or if you have or are at risk for a chronic health condition (e.g., diabetes, hypertension). If you have arthritis or other orthopedic problems that cause pain with physical activity, talk to your doctor about your options, including the services provided by a physical therapist who can help you design a program that will work for you. You may need to ask your physician for a referral.

Other links to reference articles:

www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5302a1.htm

www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/recommendations/older_adults.htm