

Get ME Active

"Promoting Healthy Lifestyles Through Physical Activity"



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Boost Your Immune System this Flu Season - with Exercise!

By Anne-Marie Davee, MS, RD, LD

In Maine, the winter months are linked with cold and flu season - and this year is no exception. In fact, another strain of virus has been added, the H1N1 or swine flu. This virus is easily spread through coughing and sneezing and most often shows up in youth. This winter it is particularly important to do what you can to prevent the spread of colds and flu.

Healthy lifestyle habits such as getting plenty of rest, staying physically active, managing stress, drinking plenty of fluids, and making healthy food choices all support overall good health.

There are several theories behind the reasons that regular exercise can boost our immune system. First, that physical activity may help reduce the incidence of colds and flu by flushing bacteria out of the lungs. Second, that moderate exercise has been linked to a temporary boost in the production of the body's cells that can attack bacteria. Third, physical activity sends both antibodies and white blood cells through the body at a quicker rate thus they are better able to kill bacteria and viruses. Lastly, it is well documented that moderate exercise helps relieve stress. A reduction in stress slows down the release of stress-related hormones, like cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones can impair the body's immune system and lead to an increase in the incidence of cold and flu infections.

Regular physical activity means being active most days of the week with a minimum daily guideline ranging from 30-60 minutes. Moderate exercise in the winter may include walking, hiking, snowshoeing, skiing, skating or playing ice

hockey. Indoor activities are more preferable for many and may include joining a gym, walking on a home treadmill, working out to a video, or playing basketball. Always choose what is best for you so that you are likely to continue with the activity.

There are other daily actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause colds and flu. Take these steps to protect you and your family:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. When tissues are not available, cough or sneeze into a sleeve to prevent the germs from getting on your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze, after use of the bathroom, and before eating. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people or those experiencing flu-like symptoms.

If you do get sick with a cold or flu, it is best to stay home from work or school and limit contact with others. By doing so, you will not infect others. General guidelines are to stay at home for 24-48 hours after your symptoms resolve (meaning no fever for 1-2 days). As always, contact your family physician or health care provider if your symptoms get worse.

For more information, go to the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention web site at <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/swine-flu-2009.shtml>.

This winter, stay active and be healthy!

A Place for Recreation

Wolfe's Neck Farm is a historic 626-acre farm on the coast of Maine dedicated to sustainable agriculture, environmental education, and community well-being through the enjoyment of our natural landscape.

Wolfe's Neck Farm has many opportunities for individuals, families, and groups to visit the Farm and enjoy the natural beauty of the area. The Farm encourages visitors to walk the trails which takes them through woodlands, pastures, marshes and along the shores of Casco Bay. In the summer, visitors can also kayak, fish and swim; and in the winter months, cross-country ski and snowshoe.

Wolfe's Neck Farm is located at 184 Burnett Road in Freeport, Maine. For more information and directions, go to the Wolfe's Neck Farm website: <http://www.wolfesneckfarm.org/recreation.php>

For more information on any of the events mentioned in this newsletter or about the Maine Governor's Council, check out our web page at www.maineinmotion.org; email us at info@maineinmotion.org, call us at 207-622-7566, ext. 230, or write us at 11 Parkwood Drive, Augusta, ME 04330.

Strategies Used to Increase Lifestyle Physical Activity In a Pedometer-Based Intervention

by Karen Croteau, USM

There has been an increased emphasis on the development of lifestyle interventions to increase physical activity. The focus on lifestyle physical activity is on the self-selection of activities that can be incorporated throughout the day in a variety of settings.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study was to determine the self-selected strategies participants used to increase physical activity during an 8-week pedometer-based lifestyle intervention.

METHODS: Participants were 34 employees of a small northeast private college, with a mean age of 44.3 (+/-9.3) years. The intervention consisted of a counseling session which addressed goal setting (daily steps), strategy selection (activities to increase daily steps), daily pedometer usage and self-monitoring (daily steps and strategies used). Measures included height, weight and pedometer-assessed ambulatory activity. Participants were placed in body mass index (BMI) and weekly physical activity improvement tertiles. BMI categories included normal weight (BMI < 25), overweight (BMI 25.0-29.9), and obese (BMI > / =30). Weekly physical activity improvement categories included small/no improvement (<1%/week), moderate improvement (1-5%/week), and large improvement (>5%/week). Data

analysis consisted of descriptive and nonparametric inferential statistics (Chi Square).

RESULTS: Participants in this study used 11 primary strategies on a regular basis to increase daily physical activity. The percentage of participants who used these strategies were as follows: walking before work (35.3%), at lunch (47.1%), after work (50.0%), to a meeting or work-related errand (64.7%), on the weekend (32.4%), while traveling (32.4%), with the dog (32.4%), or to a destination (work/store) (29.4%). Additionally, participants parked further (50%), used the stairs rather than an elevator (23.5%), and performed other cardiovascular activity (52.9%). Differences among BMI groups were found for the parking further strategy ($p < 0.05$), with obese participants utilizing this strategy significantly more than overweight participants. No significant differences were found among weekly physical activity improvement groups.

CONCLUSION: This study indicates that participants in a pedometer-based lifestyle physical activity intervention utilized a variety of strategies to increase daily physical activity. Recommendations for future research include examining the contribution of occupational activity to total physical activity, as well as the time spent utilizing each strategy.

Upcoming Council Events

February 9, 2010 - Legislative Wellness Day

April 27, 2010 - Maine Fitness Awards

May 5, 2010 - All Children Exercising Simultaneously (ACES) Day

May 19, 2010 - National Employee Health & Fitness Day

Visit www.maineinmotion.org for a complete description of the events listed above.

Council Member Profile

Lee Gilman

Lee Gilman is the Senior Director of Health Promotion and Public Policy for the American Lung Association (ALA) of New England. She is responsible for Maine and New Hampshire.

Lee earned a B.S. in Education from the University of Southern Maine, an M.S. in Public Health from Boston University, and is a nationally certified Health Education Specialist.

Lee has been with ALA for seven years serving as the Program Officer and then Deputy Director before accepting the position of Vice President for Health Promotion for New England following the merger of all six ALA's in New England in 2007. In July 2009, the two areas of health promotion and public policy were combined into one department leading to the change in Lee's title and responsibilities.

Prior to joining the American Lung Association, Lee taught Health and Dance at Mt. Ararat High School in

Topsham and previously was a faculty member in the Community Health Education Department at the University of Maine at Farmington. Lee has been a member of the Governor's Council since 2003 and served as its part-time Staff Director for two years. She is an active member of the Maine Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (MAHPERD) serving on the Executive Board in several leadership positions. Lee is a member of the Kennebec Valley YMCA and also continues to take dance classes, jazz and ballet, at the Kennebec Dance Centre in Augusta.

Lee lives in Augusta with her son, Christopher, a senior this year at Cony High School.



Lee, along with her son Chris, in Times Square.

Making the Case for More PE in Schools

The passage of LD 1407 was an important first step in moving schools towards full implementation of the PE4ME Planning Team's recommendations of at least 150 minutes per week of PE and 30 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity. As a precursor to increasing minutes of PE, LD 1407 will require a comprehensive assessment of current PE practices and capacity to expand PE offerings in Maine schools. This data will help us understand how many students are actually meeting national PE standards. Using this information we will submit another bill during the Second Session of the 124th Legislature to address the gaps in schools' ability to meet these recommendations.



Council Gets Kids to Try Nordic Walking

The Governor's Council on Physical Activity had a booth at the Boys and Girls Club of Southern Maine's "Day for Kids," on September 19th, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm at L.L. Bean's Discovery Park in Freeport. As part of our exhibit, we participated with Wolfe's Neck Farm in conducting Nordic Walking demo clinics with the children.

Nearly 200 kids and their parents took part in the day's festivities and among these participants, about 100 kids and a few adults, learned about the benefits of using Nordic Walking poles to improve fitness and add an upper body workout to the traditional benefits of walking!

In addition to the Governor's Council, activities and demos were

provided by WinterKids, Maine Bike Coalition, National Weather Service, Trout Unlimited, Southern Maine Biathlon Club, and DeLorme. There was also facepainting and videography activities and L.L. Bean offered a wildlife safari in the Hunting & Fishing Department, Aquarium Talk, and Camp Site Set-up Demos in the retail store.



Gestalt and Obesity

by Roger Park

When it comes to addressing the obesity crisis in our culture, Mainers, like all well intentioned people, look for answers - causes that can be modified or corrected. The term crisis is not used loosely here. Obesity is a serious health risk that leads to cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, increased risk of cancer, osteoarthritis, and significant metabolic dysfunctions such as diabetes. Health professionals are alarmed because obesity and its effects may cause children to have shorter lifespans than their parents for the first time in a culture that has prided itself on medical sophistication and longevity.

Concerned people all over the world are trying to find the proverbial "magic bullet" in the battle against obesity. Naturally, researchers are targeting behaviors such as soft drink use, school curricula lacking physical education, and television and computer viewing times, among others.

At this juncture, the evidence is pointing to the need for a different approach toward obesity prevention and treatment. It appears that a wide ranging, multi-component approach is necessary in our struggle against fatness and poor health choices. In fact, the term "Gestalt" has been applied to such an approach by an epidemiologist in an editorial in the Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine (Vol. 163, No. 4, April 2009, p. 389).

Gestalt is a theory taken from psychology that basically states that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Taber's Medical Dictionary (F.A. Davis, 13th ed. 1977) also mentions that the sum total of our mind cannot be broken into parts and investigated independently.

Perhaps our physiological trend toward heaviness and poor health choices requires a good dose of Gestalt theory. A recent Dutch study of 1,108 youngsters in 18 Dutch secondary schools seems to back this up. The authors of a well received study

called "Dutch Obesity Interventions in Teenagers - Effectiveness of a School Based Program on Body Composition and Behavior" (Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine, Vol. 163 [Nov. 4], 2009, 309-317) noted a significant decrease in skin fold sums (a measure of lean body mass) for girls and waist circumference and skin fold thickness for boys at 8 months and 20 months after a well designed program. The program targeted energy intake and output behaviors through special physical education and biology classes. Significant reductions in unhealthy sugary beverages were noted 8 and 12 months after the classes only to rebound to unhealthy levels at 20 months post class exposure.

There were no significant effects on two key targets: consumption of snacks and active commuting to school (walking and/or biking instead of car/bus transport). The author concluded that inconsistent effects on body composition of boys and girls and unhealthy behaviors such as television viewing and consumption of high calorie snacks took place even after a well designed school program.

At first blush, the average individual might say that school-based programs - the current gold standard in the battle against obesity - are not working. This is where the Gestalt theory applies. The fact is that school-based interdisciplinary programs can bring about change, but only if they are empowered by the external environment outside of school.

True health is literally a collaboration of school, educators, parents, community, academia, law and more. A well run school program must be supported externally if it is to succeed - that's the Gestalt!

Remember the old adage: "We have met the enemy and it is us." The reverse is also true: we have found a friend, a collaborator, and it is us. We all have a role in changing and eliminating obesity and we must all pitch in - Gestalt. The way that we think, what we say, how we volunteer, and the tasks we do *will* make a difference in the battle against obesity.

At the Movies for Health

Here is some healthy movie viewing for those who wish to be entertained and intellectually stimulated: "King Corn." "King Corn" is a delicious 90 minute documentary film about two young men who discover that corn is more than an American way of life. Ian Cheney and Curt Ellis are two Bostonians who become gentleman farmers investigating the who, what, and whys of agriculture in America when they discover that corn is part of their physical makeup. The film, directed by Aaron Woolf, truthfully sizes up our food system and provides a unique view of our current obesity epidemic. Rated G for general audience and a good educational offering.

