



## Lift Off! 10-Minute Physical Activity Breaks

### Physical Activity and Chronic Diseases

Physical activity can be done to reduce the risk of many widespread chronic diseases and ailments. Heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, lower back pain, and asthma are the most common within the African American community.

#### Heart Disease

According to the American Heart Association, heart disease remains the number one killer of Americans. Unfortunately, over 100,000 African-Americans died from heart disease in 2001. It is the leading cause of death for African-American males and females. Regular physical activity, like walking, bicycling, aerobics, and many other activities, can be done to reduce the risk of having heart disease. People who do not participate in regular physical activity have a 30-50% greater risk of developing high blood pressure. Whether it is attending exercise classes or walking around the neighborhood with your children, physical activity benefits the heart and increases your chances of living a long, healthy life. For more healthy heart information, visit the American Heart Association website at [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org).

#### Stroke

While heart disease may be the number one killer of Americans, stroke is number 3. Someone in America has a stroke every 45 seconds, accounting for almost 700,000 people a year. African-Americans are twice as likely to have a first-time stroke compared to Caucasians. Strokes can lead to long-term disabilities and discomforts. Heart disease, obesity, and physical inactivity are only a few of the factors that can increase the risk for this disease. Moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week reduces the risk of stroke. Yard work, gardening, dancing, or roller skating are only a few of activities that can be done to benefit the heart. For a list of possible activities, visit the American Stroke Association website at [www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org).

#### Cancer

Unfortunately, we lose many of our friends and family members to cancer every year. Cancer is attacking the African-American community in many regions of the body, including the lungs, breasts, colon, and liver. To encourage life and healthy living, the American Cancer Society recommends healthy eating and regular physical activity to decrease the risk of cancer. These are just a few simple tips that can help to reduce your risk of cancer. Instead of taking the elevator for close floors, try the stairs. Walk for ten minutes during lunch breaks with your coworkers. Physical activity does not have to be planned or structured. Just walking around the home or office benefits the body. For more ways to reduce the risk of cancer, visit the American Cancer Society website at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

## **Physical Activity and Chronic Diseases (continued)**

### **Diabetes**

Walking has proven to be a great way to lose weight and become physically fit. For example, the recently completed Diabetes Prevention Program enrolled participants who were at high risk for developing type II diabetes. Participants lost weight and started a program of 30 minutes of moderate physical activity 5 days a week. Walking was the primary exercise for most of the people. The results were remarkable! People who were regularly active and followed a healthy diet decreased their risk of developing the disease and avoided medications. Participants in the study reduced their risk of developing diabetes by 58%. Walking is natural and it is free. It requires no special equipment and people of all ages can enjoy it. Walking with family or friends can be a great way to not only reduce your risk of diabetes, but help to maintain a healthy family. For a sample walking program, visit the American Diabetes Association website at [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).

### **Arthritis & Lower Back Pain**

Nearly 70 million Americans are affected by arthritis or some type of joint pain. Arthritis is one of the most common diseases in the United States. Reports have shown that the older adult population is increasing; therefore steps should be taken to reduce the amount of people with this painful ailment. One simple way to reduce the risk of arthritis and lower back pain is to remain physically active. Physical activity decreases pain, improves function, and decreases joint injuries. Participating in 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week can help you to stay healthy, happy, and productive. For more information on keeping healthy joints and reducing pain, visit the Arthritis Foundation website at [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org).

### **Asthma**

Asthma is a disease that affects your airways, which are the tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs. If these airways are irritated, they can become swollen and cause such symptoms as wheezing or coughing. Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled. Besides taking the proper medications and staying away from irritable agents, physical activity can help to strengthen your lungs. However, when being physically active with asthma, remember not to stay clear of extreme hot or cold temperatures and high pollutant areas and to keep your asthma medication near.