



NEWS RELEASE

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Physical Activity Can Benefit Middle Aged Women

There is much evidence that supports the numerous benefits of physical activity for all ages. Recent research reported in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, found that middle-aged women who practiced habitual physical activity had higher resting metabolic rates and lower percent body fat and fat mass as compared to sedentary women of similar age and overall weight.

The study compared healthy, weight-stable pre-menopausal women aged 30 to 50 years of age to examine the effect habitual physical activity has on resting metabolic rates and body composition. Women were classified as either active (approximately 9 hours per week of physical activity for 10 or more years) or sedentary (approximately 1 hour per week of physical activity). There were 18 active and 14 sedentary participants. The groups were similar in body mass, fat free mass, and body mass index and age. This means that even though the activity levels were higher in the active group, there was no difference in age and body size between the two groups.

The results of the research showed that the active women's group had 18.9% body fat, while the sedentary group had 28.8% body fat. Resting metabolic rate was found to be significantly higher in the active women compared to the sedentary group.

The data from the study indicates that middle-age women who practice habitual physical activity can maintain lower body fat and higher resting metabolic rate than sedentary women.

According to the authors, "Exercise is especially beneficial for women because it helps prevent the loss of fat free mass, strength, bone mineral density, and functional ability that usually occur with aging, while helping to maintain lower fat mass and reduce the risk of obesity."

In addition to the factors mentioned above, claims have been made that physical activity may promote psychological well-being and self-esteem and may reduce a person's risk of heart disease, colon cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Over time, even a small increase in physical activity may be beneficial to overall health.

If nine hours a week sounds like a lot of time to spend exercising, think of starting with one or two half-hour walks each day. Then you can increase the time to 45 minutes each. This will give you nine hours per week of exercise! The benefits are worth the time.

Referenced from Nancy Feldman, UCCE Stanislaus County; Source: eFOOD RAP, Volume 12, Number 2, January 18, 2002.