**Tip of the Month from Health & Wellness Committee**

**The Importance of Physical Activity**

Engaging in regular physical activity is one of the most important things that people of all ages can do to improve their health. Physical activity strengthens bones and muscles, reduces stress and depression, and makes it easier to maintain a healthy body weight or to reduce weight if overweight or obese.  Even people who do not lose weight get substantial benefits from regular physical activity, including lower rates of high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer.

Healthy physical activity includes aerobic activity, muscle strengthening activities, and activities to increase balance and flexibility. Adults should engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week, and children and teenagers should engage in at least one hour of activity each day.

***What Can Individuals and Families Do?***

* Engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week (adults) or at least one hour of activity each day (children). Walk or bike short distances rather than driving.
* Supplement aerobic activities with muscle strengthening activities on two or more days a week that involve all major muscle groups.
* Consider following the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations for limiting screen time among children.

***What Can Businesses and Employers Do?***

* Adopt policies and programs that promote walking, bicycling, and use of public transportation (e.g., provide access to fitness equipment and facilities, bicycle racks, walking paths, and changing facilities with showers).
* Design or redesign communities to promote opportunities for active transportation (e.g., include places for physical activity in building and development plans).
* Sponsor a new or existing park, playground, or trail, recreation or scholastic program, or beautification or maintenance project.

Get a head start on a happy and healthy new year. Set a good example, and make a point to be more active this year. Both your physical and mental health will benefit.

*Adapted from US Dept. of Health & Human Services*

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