

THE WEEKLY Herald

EDMONDS • LYNNWOOD
MOUNTLAKE TERRACE

Published: Wednesday, July 4, 2012

Physical activity vs. fitness

POINTS OF VIEW | By Elizabeth Kovar

In an ideal world, people would be physically active and fit. However, people often confuse the difference between physical activity and exercise.

Physical activity includes body movement that utilizes muscles and requires more energy than rest. Examples include gardening, raking the leaves, vacuuming and grocery shopping. Exercise is a form of physical activity that is planned, structured and maintains your heart rate at a certain level for a specific length of time. This includes group fitness classes, jogging, lifting weights or swimming.

This quandary exists because of people not understanding the distinction. In reality, people need to exercise and stay physically active throughout the day. As the average American eats, sleeps and works sitting or lying down, that 30-60 minutes of exercise may not be enough for weight maintenance. A common example is the European lifestyle. Whether or not these people work out in a gym, they are commuting to work or daily activities by foot or bike. Many individuals who live in a major city are prone to staying slim since they are consistently walking, not driving. Walking to lunch or the post office is a simple way to keep bodies and hearts active throughout the day.

Why is it important to stay active throughout the day beyond going to the gym? Our bodies were not made to rest. Long-term sedentary lifestyles lead to “hypokinetic” diseases. Examples include obesity, heart disease, diabetes, osteoarthritis or some forms of cancer.

It is common for people to be sedentary 22-23 hours per day thanks to the television -- the average American’s choice of sedentary recreation. Australian researchers linked watching TV with an 18 percent increase of dying of heart

disease.

What to do next? Try to squeeze in two 15-minute bouts of physical activity per day along with your regular workout regimen.

Elizabeth Kovar is the fitness coordinator at the Lynnwood Recreation Center. She has international fitness experience and also is a freelance fitness writer. Questions or comments can be directed to ekovar@ci.lynnwood.wa.us.