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Community Coming Together (CCT)

This month's theme: *Fitness & Nutrition*

Walk Your Way to Wellness

By Patti Wagman

This month, CCT's theme focuses on fitness and nutrition. Of course all of us know the health benefits to exercise and eating well yet so many of us still struggle to implement a regular fitness regimen to our lives. The justifications we have are varied, from not having enough time to believing that fitness requires expensive gym memberships or home equipment. Well, we have a powerful fitness tool right at our fingertips...or actually, at the tips of our toes! It's walking, and there is growing scientific evidence to show that when walking is done often and properly, it can deliver benefits that are just as remarkable as those often gained from more strenuous activities. Walking is an inexpensive pursuit and accessible to almost everyone. It is rarely associated with injury and can easily be taken up by people of all

ages and fitness levels, and does not require any special skills or equipment. While the physical advantages of walking are well known, there may be a few mental health benefits that surprise you:

It curbs dips in energy. *Diabetes Care* published a 2013 article showing that three 15-minute walks after meals each day worked better at stabilizing blood-sugar levels than a single 45-minute walk midmorning or in the afternoon.

It lifts your spirits. In 1984, Robert Thayer found that "Just 10 minutes of walking at the pace you would use if you were late for an appointment-but obviously without that stress of being late-can boost your mood for two hours." In his study, Thayer asked volunteers



to assess the severity of an ongoing personal problem then sent them on a 10-minute walk. Afterward, the subjects were asked to assess their problems again. This time they described their predicaments as less serious. Thayer found similar improvements in a second group of subjects who were asked to rate their level of optimism before and after a walk. The *British Journal of Sports Medicine* also found that walking 30 minutes a day boosted the moods in depressed patients faster than antidepressants. Why? Walking releases natural painkilling endorphins to the body – one of the emotional benefits of exercise. A California State University, Long



Beach, study showed that the more steps people took during the day, the better their moods were.

It keeps our brains sharp. According to a 2011 study published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, elderly subjects who walked for 40 minutes three times a week for a year experienced a 2 percent average increase in size of the hippocampus, the part of the brain that controls memory and emotion. Another study of 6,000 women, ages 65 and older, performed by researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, found that age-related memory decline was lower in those who walked more. The women walking 2.5 miles per day had a 17-percent decline in memory, as opposed to a 25-percent decline in women who walked less than a half-mile per week. In 2011, the *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine* published a study that showed students who walked or cycled to school had better cognitive performance than their less active peers.

Of course, our Canadian weather is often a deterrent to walking outdoors as we are either freezing and slipping on ice in the cold months or scorching under the blazing summer sun. Treadmills are one option but again, the cost of this equipment is sometimes prohibitive to people. There are several good walking DVD's on the market as well as for loan at the Medicine Hat Public Library. Leslie Sansone is a fitness expert who has created the *Walk at Home* series of fitness DVD's that are geared toward all ages (from kids to seniors) and fitness levels. You can try out some of her videos on YouTube as well.

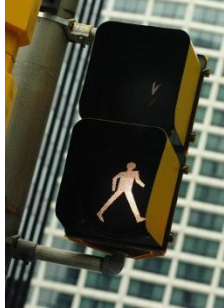
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Planning Your Summer Activities

A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken. ~ James Dent

Summer Camps And Day Camps



MHCBE Preschool Daycamp: ages 3-5, St. Patrick's School. Weekly sessions for 3 hours/day, Mon.-Fri., from July 9 – Aug. 17. \$70/week. Call (403)502-8365 for more info.

Camp McCoy: a non-denominational, residential summer camping experience for children between the ages of 6 and 15. Call (403)866-4147 or visit http://nonprofit.memlane.com/camp_mccoy for more information.

Eagle's Nest Ranch: A non-profit inter-denominational, Christian camp whose mission is to meet the emotional, physical and spiritual needs of their campers. Call (403)527-3815 or www.enr.ca for registration or other information.

Whispering Pines: A place away from the ordinary! Located in the beautiful Cypress Hills of Alberta in a lovely treed valley only a 1/4 mile from Elkwater. Christian-based camps for kids and/or families. Call (403)893-2072 or www.whisperingpinescamp.ca

PAS Program: Free summer program for teens ages 12-18 offered by Alberta Health Services, focusing on building life and social skills. Mon.- Fri., July 9-Aug. 3. Call (403)528-5611 or (403)529-8903.

Esplanade Summer Art Camps: ages 5 to 14, full-day camps. Call (403)502.8793 or www.esplanade.ca

Salta Day Camps: full and half-day camps for ages 5-12. Call (403) 526-2900 or www.saltagym.com/summer.php

College Day Camps: full and half-day camps for children and teens. (403)529.3844 or www.mhc.ab.ca/continuing-studies

YMCA Day Camps: ages 5-12. Call (403)528-1631 or www.ymca-medicinehat.org

Youth Action Society: Afternoon and evening programs for youth. Call (403)528-8068 or www.mhyas.com