

Walking in a winter wonderland!

Tips from a pro on winter physical activity

Story by Kendall Olson, Primary Care Initiative, Program Management Office

At this time of year and indeed for a good portion of winter, we often find ourselves moving too little and eating too much. If this describes you, do not despair! Edmonton Oliver Primary Care Network Exercise Specialist Lisa Workman provides seven steps to help you get active and stay active.



Lisa Workman,
Exercise
Specialist,
Edmonton
Oliver Primary
Care Network

1. Identify your current **physical fitness level**

Lisa says that the first thing a person needs to do is realistically assess their physical abilities before embarking on a new activity. "Knowing where to begin is very important", she says. "Sometimes I help patients reframe their exercise reference, if they played sports 20 years ago their capabilities may be very different today." By identifying your current fitness level you can avoid unnecessary pain and possible injury, setting yourself up for success.

2. Define your **goals and preferences**

The next important step is to look at the result you want from physical activity. For weight management the primary area would be cardiovascular training. If your goal is blood glucose control then a combination of cardiovascular and resistance training is ideal. Once a person knows what they want from their exercise, they can best determine their preferred activities. If being outside is not possible, what are your indoor options? Lisa says many malls open early and allow for walking programs.

3. Review your **budget**

Do you need to spend a lot of money to achieve physical fitness? Lisa points out that by doing a little homework you can commit to being active without breaking the bank. Many community leagues operate skating rinks and most parks have running, walking and cross-country skiing trails. "Watch out for gimmicks", warns Lisa, "Be careful of buying into the advertising and purchasing equipment that may end up gathering dust."

4. Assess your **resources**

Identify what you have at your disposal right now. Lisa points out that the internet provides access to free resources including walking videos, stretching programs, yoga and more. "The public library is a great resource for exercise videos that you can borrow to try out before spending money to buy your own," says Lisa, "There are also dozens of apps online for your smart phone or mp3 device – use technology to help keep you on track." Sometimes, it's as simple as finding a cause to volunteer for that will help get you moving. "Confidence in your ability to be physically active comes from taking small achievable steps in the right direction." *(continued on back)*

40 PCNS IN ALBERTA
MORE PCNS IN DEVELOPMENT

2,400+ PHYSICIANS AND
HUNDREDS OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS
WORKING IN PCNS

2.8 million+ PATIENTS
CARED FOR BY PCN TEAMS

Prescription to Get Active program introduced to Leduc Beaumont Devon Primary Care Network patients

Submitted by Candra Tinis, Leduc Beaumont Devon Primary Care Network

Through the new Prescription to Get Active program, Leduc Beaumont Devon Primary Care Network (LBD PCN) patients can now be prescribed exercise by their family physician.

The LBD PCN has partnered with local municipalities in a unique venture where local family physicians prescribe physical activity to patients who they feel would benefit from increased activity.

With each 'Prescription to Get Active' doctors are able to prescribe the intensity, duration and frequency of activity a patient is suggested to take on in order to prevent future medical issues. Regular physical exercise has been shown to improve health and quality of life, as well as significantly reduce the risks of chronic disease, disability and premature death.

"Physicians often prescribe medications to treat diseases. Through this program they can prescribe exercise to their patients as a way to signify its importance in both prevention and management of numerous chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease", says Len Frank, Executive Director of the LBD PCN. "This program demonstrates the collective commitment of family physicians and the Town of Beaumont to improving the health and wellness of the communities we serve."

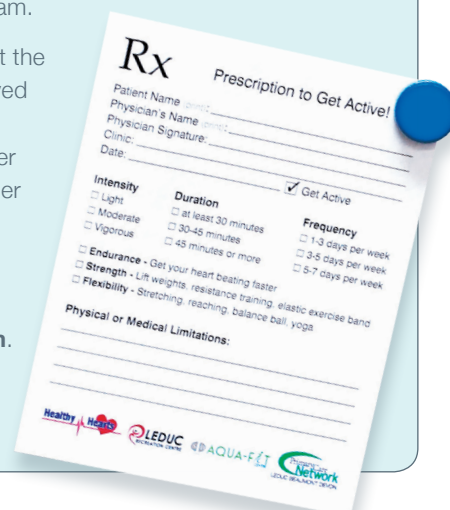
This unique partnership includes community-based recreation centres and 51 LBD PCN member physicians who promote

active living in Leduc, Beaumont, Devon and the surrounding region by encouraging their residents to 'get active'. Some suggested activities include walking the dog, enjoying outdoor winter activities, riding a bike to work and may also include utilizing facilities such as local recreation centres.

Eligible LBD PCN patients may also receive a one-month membership to a couple of local fitness centres via a physician's prescription and can choose any activity offered by the centre, such as swimming or fitness classes. Physicians have been provided with 'prescription pads' to write the patient's prescription to get active. Patients are required to call the facility to set up an initial appointment where they will receive a tour, have an orientation and instruction session with staff and receive an individually designed program.

The project, which launched at the end of October and has received positive feedback from both LBD PCN patients and member physicians, will run until summer 2012.

For more information on Prescription to Get Active, please visit www.lbdpcn.com.



Walking in a winter wonderland! (continued)

5. Schedule time for you

Planning is important. One tool Lisa sometimes has her patients undertake is to track their time during the day. "Often there are pockets of time that could be used for physical activity. Take the time to give back to you. It's not selfishness; it's investing in your health both mentally and physically."

6. Keep yourself motivated

It is o.k. to start small! Often chronic disease patients don't realize that they can do small activities, even exercising while seated. Gradual changes can make the difference. "You live in a condo or an apartment and need to get the mail every day - try walking the hallway an extra time or two or taking the stairs." Workman advises the way to stay motivated is to make exercise fit into your everyday life.

7. Enjoy seasonal activities

We live in a northern climate and need to accept that. "Winter happens every year", says Lisa, "Why not embrace our environment?" She reminds us that play is important and exercise can be fun. "Build a snowman with your grandchildren, shovel snow, go curling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, skating, geo-caching, tobogganing or just plain walking!"

"Remember, if you are planning to start a physical activity, especially if you haven't been very active before, or not for a long time, talk with your family doctor", says Workman.

For more information about Edmonton Oliver Primary Care Network, visit www.edmontonoliverpcn.com.