

Exercise On A "shoe string" Budget

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Some people think that to have a good exercise program you have to buy a lot of fitness equipment, and invest a lot of money. After spending the last 40 years in the fitness and exercise field, we can say that is not true. The fact is, a person can have a good fitness program without spending any money buying exercise equipment. And it is not necessary to join a gym, or fitness club either.

In our fitness stores, 'Legge Fitness Superstores' in Listowel and Fergus, we are in the business of selling quality fitness products for the consumer to use in their fitness room at home, and we also sell commercial fitness products that are used in gyms and fitness clubs. However, in this article we are going to show you how to have a good exercise program, without buying exercise equipment and without joining a gym or fitness club. In other words, how to exercise on a 'shoe string' budget.

THREE EXERCISE CATEGORIES

To begin, most fitness professionals agree that physical exercise can be broken down into 3 categories. First, is *cardiovascular training* for the cardiac muscle (heart), and the respiratory system (lungs) and the circulatory system (arteries, veins and capillaries). Second, is *strength training* for the muscular system and skeletal systems. Third, is a *stretching program* for the muscles, tendons, and ligaments, and to decompress the joints to help with the rehydration of the cartilage and discs.

Another important point that most fitness professionals agree on is that physical exercise is not just for children in school. We know that people need to have an exercise or fitness program throughout their life, and the older we get the *more important* it becomes. There is a quote from the 1800's which says, "Those who don't make time for exercise now, will have to make time for illness later." If we don't have an *appropriate* age-related fitness program our bodies will decondition and weaken, and our quality of life and level of health will diminish

prematurely! Nobody wants that.

CARDIOVASCULAR TRAINING

So, let's get started. Cardiovascular training involves elevating the heart rate into an age-related *target zone* for 30-45 minutes, 3 to 5 times per week. Some people will wear a wireless heart rate monitor that will give a continuous and accurate display of their pulse or heart rate, or they can check their pulse at their wrist or neck to make sure they are in their target zone. A healthy 20 year old will have a target zone in the 130-170 beats per minute range, but a healthy 60 year old will have a target zone in the 104-136 beats per minute range. There are charts available that explain the exercise range for a person's heart rate based on their age, their level of health, and what they want to achieve.

There is a saying that, *'the 2 best doctors in the world are your right leg and your left leg'*. This certainly holds true for cardiovascular training. Walking has always been the most common and effective exercise since the beginning of recorded history! In fact, prior to the industrial revolution of the 1800's, most people walked several miles every day. In third world countries most people still walk many miles every day. In modern countries some people do very little walking, but it is gaining in popularity, and there are some people who will add jogging or even running to their exercise program if they are young and healthy, and want to elevate their heart rate into their age-related target zone. Cycling has become another popular cardiovascular exercise because it will elevate our heart rate into the target zone just as effectively as walking or jogging without the impact on our joints.

'TRAINING-IN-PLACE' (T.I.P.)

Cardiovascular training indoors is simple and fun, and that's good news because not everyone can, or even wants to walk or bike outdoors. The *foundational exercises* for indoor training are called 'Training-In-Place' exercises, or T.I.P. exercises. These exercises involve walking,

marching, running, or skipping in place without moving around.

However, some people like to take a few steps forwards and then backwards again, or even stepping to one side and then back again which makes it more interesting. While doing these exercises it is important to raise your arms and legs as high as is comfortable. Some people will gradually work towards having their arms fully extended over their head, and their knees coming up to their waist. When your right knee comes up, your left arm should be over your head. When your left knee comes up, your right arm should be over your head. You can do this exercise as slow or fast as you want, and you can raise your arms and legs as little or as much as you want. When your foot comes down, land on the ball of your foot to absorb impact rather than landing on your heels.

For variety, you can supplement 'Training-In-Place' exercises with going up and down stairs in your house, and doing 'jumping jacks' and 'stride jumps', or even just walking around your house to catch your breath and lower your heart rate if it's too high.

Another good exercise is to step up on the bottom stair of a staircase, and then back down again. When you step up on the stair raise both arms over your head, and when you step back down lower both of your arms. For more variety you can use 2" by 12" boards cut about 30 inches long, and stacked on top of each other. People will vary the height from one board, up to 6-8 boards depending on how high they want the 'step' to be. Always secure the boards together by tightening a ratchet strap around them so they can't move.

STRENGTH TRAINING

Strength training is necessary to strengthen the over 400 skeletal muscles and over 200 joints in the body. *Calisthenics* are ideal for this because you can use your own body weight for resistance. The main exercises would be toe touches, squats, push ups, sit ups, leg lifts (front, side and rear), dips, lunges, vertical knee raises, calf raises, side bends,

back extensions, pull-ups and crunches. It is interesting that your strength training can double as cardiovascular training if you don't rest between exercises, and that way you can keep your heart rate elevated and in the target zone for your age. Most people will aim for 10 repetitions of each exercise. The exercises can be done as slow or as fast as you want depending on your age and level of fitness. If you aren't familiar with some of the calisthenic exercises, just call our fitness store and we can explain them to you. It is a good idea to have a foam mat or cushioned rug to exercise on to provide shock absorption. Also, wear a good pair of lace-up shoes for support and shock absorption.

STRETCHING PROGRAM

A stretching program is essential to help the joints decompress so that the cartilage and discs (fluid cushions) can rehydrate, and that helps keep the joints cushioned and healthy. Most people *lose an inch of spine length* every 25 years because of the downward pressure of gravity. That's why so many people have concerns with their back, hips, shoulders and neck. One technique to help decompress the back is to lie face down across a bed with someone holding your feet, and your upper body over the side of the bed. Your upper body weight will stretch your back muscles. Another stretching exercise is to hang by your hands from a sturdy bar or board that will support your body weight, or even use a low branch of a tree. Another stretching technique is to stand in the corner of a kitchen counter, and support your body weight by putting your hands on each side of the counter. You should supplement these back stretches with bending and stretching exercises for all of the main joints in the body. The stretches should be comfortable, and most people hold stretches for 10 to 30 seconds or whatever is comfortable. It is interesting that dogs and cats enjoy doing their stretching exercises without any training or incentives!

FOR VARIETY

To keep your exercise program interesting, you can do a minute of 'Training-In-Place', and then one strength exercise. Then do another minute of 'T.I.P.' exercise, followed by a different strength exercise. Then do another minute of 'T.I.P.' exercise, and so on until you have completed a 30 minute workout. After 30 minutes a person would have

completed about 15 minutes of 'Training-In-Place', and about 15 or more different strength (calisthenic) exercises. This is an interesting and time-efficient way to combine cardiovascular training with strength training *all in one exercise session!*

There is an infinite number of variations of this type of *circuit training* or *interval training* where exercises are switched out, and the number of different exercises, as well as the length of time you spend doing each exercise can be changed. For example, instead of doing one minute of T.I.P. exercise, and then one calisthenic exercise, you could do several minutes of T.I.P. exercises, and then do several different calisthenic exercises in a row. The more variety you have in your exercise sessions the better. The goal is simply to *keep your body moving* for the 30 minute session. If your body is moving, your heart rate will be elevated and that provides a strengthening benefit for your whole cardiovascular system. By incorporating your strength training in with the T.I.P. exercises you are not only getting a good cardiovascular benefit, but you are also doing an excellent strength training workout for all of the muscles and joints in the body.

A good way to include your stretching program, is to do some stretches as a 'warm up' at the beginning of your exercise session, and also as a 'cool down' at the end of your exercise session.

Remember, a 30 minute workout is probably about 3% of your day, so there are no excuses. In fact, medical researchers have found that 75% of degenerate diseases can be prevented with lifestyle changes. Heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and liver and kidney diseases are some examples of the most common degenerative diseases which have reached epidemic levels in modern societies. Lifestyle changes would include proper exercise, a healthy diet and stress management. So, that's why there are no excuses nowadays. And the best time to start changing your life is ... today!

BY THE WAY ... START GRADUALLY!

It is important to begin any exercise program gradually, and so some people start with as little as a few minutes every other day. Each week you can increase your exercise session by 5 minutes *if* you are comfortable. If you are not comfortable increasing your time, then stay at the same

length of exercise session. After 6 weeks on this graduated program a person could be up to 30 minutes 3 times per week. Everyone is different and we need to listen to our body, and always be comfortable and feeling good while exercising. If an exercise is too hard for you, or if you feel discomfort, pain or stress then don't do that exercise. *Always stay in your comfort zone!*

If you have questions about what your heart rate should be for your age while exercising, or if you are not sure about how to do some of the exercises, just call our store, or come in and talk to us. We are here to help you improve your level of health and wellness. You also might want to go on our website at leggefittness.com and click on 'Resources' and then 'Articles of Interest'. We have all of our past articles from the 'Rural Route Magazine' going back over two years on our website. The articles that relate to fitness and exercise could be helpful. They are ... 'Cardiovascular Training For Fitness, Health and Youthfulness' May 2015; 'Cardiovascular Training For Fitness, Health and Youthfulness – (Part 2)' June 2015; 'Cardiovascular Training For Fitness, Health and Youthfulness – (Part 3)' July/August 2015; 'Cardiovascular Training – Review' September 2015; and 'Is Gravity Our Friend?' Dec. 2015/Jan. 2016.

A word of caution. It is recommended to have a medical check-up before beginning any exercise program to see if there is some reason why you shouldn't be exercising.

Next month in the 'Rural Route Magazine' we are going to change gears and talk about ... 'Children – Our Priceless Treasure.' Don't miss it! ✨



The above article was written by Philip Legge, who is the founder of Legge Fitness Superstores. Legge Fitness Superstores is located in **Listowel and Fergus Ontario**. For more information, please call 1-800-695-7338 or email info@leggefittness.com. Visit their website www.leggefittness.com to view their full line of health and fitness products and services.