

Exercise? Not now . . . then when?

By Allan Checkoway



My interest in writing for mobileWOMEN.org began when I realized my previous articles had not focused on gender or any particular cause of disability. I also realized my experiences in working with disabled employees of client companies gave me a valuable perspective on the process of becoming disabled and the lifestyle changes that need to occur.

When I recently fractured my hip, I learned an important lesson I want to share with you. Being in good physical health meant I recovered quicker and without complications (vs. others who don't exercise). Hence, I am today MOST grateful I built in the "exercise habit" decades ago, without realizing how helpful it would be rehabbing at this moment in time.

We know that Exercise has the potential to prevent chronic disease, improve the health of someone with a chronic disease and help reduce the risk of additional chronic diseases. Regrettably, we know that 47 percent of adults with disabilities who are able to do aerobic physical activity don't do so.

Exercise . . . some of us do "it" diligently, other don't want to hear about "it" let alone talk about "it" or think about "it" . . . Yet we all know "it's" (exercise) important. Consider that modern science and decades of research have consistently proven unequivocally that every human being on the face of the planet is better off if we exercise on a consistent basis. Our minds, our psyche, our hearts and most parts of our bodies will be benefited if we can build exercise in one form or another into our daily routines.

Ileana Arias, principal deputy director at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, stated in a news conference "we are very concerned about this, because working-age adults with disabilities who get no aerobic physical activity are 50 percent more likely to have cancer, diabetes, stroke or heart disease than those who get the recommended amount of physical activity." "We know that regular aerobic physical activity increases heart and lung function, improves daily living activities and independence, decreases the chance of developing chronic diseases and also improves mental health "If doctors and health professionals recommend aerobic physical activity to adults with disabilities, then adults with disabilities are 82 percent more likely to be physically active." "What's clear is that exercise has the potential to prevent chronic disease, improve the health of someone with a chronic disease and help reduce the risk of additional chronic diseases". "



Vitaglide upper body exercise machine

Yet if exercise is so beneficial, why do so many of us avoid "it" day after day, year after year, until we have that first heart attack much sooner than was necessary? If you're not exercising, regardless of whether

you've always been healthy or are partially or even totally disabled; exercise can and should be part of your daily activities.

Some people become disabled in a single moment, an auto accident at 60 miles an hour, or a massive heart attack in the middle of the night. Our lives are changed irreversibly and our world as we knew it will never ever be the same again.

For those of you that are disabled today, let's establish one shared commonality . . . the day you accepted and admitted to yourself that you had joined the disabled community; your experiences were unlike those any healthy person can understand. You began to deal with the physical and emotional upset that has been likened to "walking into a wall".

If you're considered to be a "healthy American" with no discernible impairments, you have reason to be thankful. Yet at the same time, consider yourself forewarned. Many of us will become frail and eventually somewhat disabled and it can take decades to evolve. And this certainly includes America's 40+ million seniors that are today enjoying the joys of the aging process.

Exercise, I call it The Battle of the Ages. Consider why we are compelled to connect the ever increasing need to exercise with the aging process. I'm reminded of the movie The Perfect Storm. The weather reports were reporting a cold front coming down off the Canadian Shield, a hurricane off Bermuda and a storm brewing over the Great Lakes; all heading for the Grand Banks. At the same time, another storm brewing at sea reversed its expected path and began to converge on the hurricane. Meteorologists began to witness the absolute "perfect" conditions for what became known as The Perfect Storm.

This article is meant to appeal to those of you who are not currently exercising. In reading articles previously written for mobileWOMEN.org, I noticed many pictures of younger women. At the same time. I'm reminded that 47 percent of adults with disabilities who are able to do aerobic physical activity don't do so and I wondered if that was true for younger women.

It's a known fact that Father Time is very real. The actuarial tables clearly establish that as we age, there's an ever increasing risk of becoming disabled. And in all likelihood, a minimal impairment will simply get worse. At the same time, the risk of a secondary impairment looms large. The biggest single threat to the future health of a disabled person is not the disability but their inactivity. Studies show that decades ago the prescribed treatment for most disabilities was lowered activity. We now know that inactivity causes arteries to narrow and increased cholesterol, thereby increasing the risk of a heart attack.

The enjoyment of a new exercise program can result in a greater sense of well-being. Your increased activity can lead to a greater level of enthusiasm and pride in reaching new goals. Stress and isolation should diminish as well. The next step is up to you.

If you're starting a new exercise program, we suggest you visit www.cdc.gov/physicalactivityguidelines.

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*Allan Checkoway, RHU most recently authored "I'm Disabled . . . Now What?" , created for people whose lives have been impacted by changes in their overall health. Fortunately, our decades of experiences in working with people who have become disabled, sometimes ending up in long term care situations has given us a unique perspective that can benefit our readers. We've taken what we believe to be all the best up to date accessABLE resources from a multitude of resources, putting them all together in one place in "I'm Disabled . . . Now What?" and on our new website www.DisabilityandSeniorResources.com. **We are dedicated to helping restore active lifestyles.** Allan is presently the Principal of Disability Services Group, an Employee Benefit Advisory firm. Allan's address is 661 Highland Ave. Suite 103, Needham, MA 02494, tel: 781.400.5055; email: allan@disabilityservices.com*