

# the PULSE

There's never a flatline moment in the ever-racing breakthroughs in fitness, nutrition, health and sports research. Keep up with the beat.

WORDS CHAN TRAN  
HEALTH & FITNESS EXPERT MARTA MONTENEGRO

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ILLUSTRATION PETER CROWTHER / DEBUT ART



## EXERCISING A SIMPLE REMEDY

The cure for [fill-in-the-blank] is to work out.

You know you should exercise but can't follow through. What if it were what the doctor ordered?

Pamela Peeke, MD, MPH, experienced firsthand the power of the pad when she, almost jokingly, wrote out a prescription for exercise and put a symbol for infinity under "refill." Three weeks later, Peeke's patient returned 8 pounds lighter.

"I obviously did my exercise. You wrote me a prescription," the patient said.

Exercise. It can lower blood pressure and high cholesterol, and risk of obesity, diabetes, depression, arthritis, cancer, heart attacks, strokes and more—and it won't cost you a single, pretty penny. Its advocates are making sure that doctors prescribe it to you through the American College of Sports Medicine's "Exercise is Medicine" (EIM) program.

Just like how a doctor takes your vital signs (blood pressure, weight) during a regular checkup, he should also record your physical activity level and advise 30 to 60 minutes of exercise a day for most days of the week (at least 150 minutes/week for adults and 300 minutes/week for children).

"Physicians need to get in the mindset that exercise is a medication and should be prescribed

for most chronic diseases," says spokesperson Robert Sallis, MD. EIM also campaigns for physicians and fitness professionals to partner up. "Doctors should send patients to fitness professionals, just like how they refer them to other specialists," he says.

According to a recent ACSM survey, nearly two-thirds of patients said they would be more interested in exercising to stay healthy if advised by their doctor. However, many physicians don't feel comfortable talking about exercise, nor do they have the time; med students aren't necessarily learning about exercise and how to prescribe it; there are no financial incentives; doctors get little time with their patients; and some don't exercise themselves. "There's evidence that doctors who regularly exercise are more likely to counsel about it," Sallis says.

The program, launched by the ACSM and American Medical Association in 2007, is gradually picking up steam across the country, including California, New York and Florida. This summer, Florida Governor Charlie Crist officially proclaimed May as "Exercise is Medicine" month. A bill currently in Congress will require reimbursements for doctors who prescribe exercise as medicine. **S**

### BACK IT UP

Need more science to get off the couch? New studies show exercise is good for the...

### HEART

Patients with moderate to severe chronic heart failure can reduce their risk of hospitalization or death by 10% if they walk 2 mph for 25 minutes twice a week, or by 25% if they walk at 2.5 mph for 25 minutes five days a week, finds a Henry Ford Hospital study.

### LUNGS

A UK study revealed that changes in brain activity due to exercise may help reduce cigarette cravings. Ten regular smokers cycled for 10 minutes after 15 hours of abstinence from nicotine and reported fewer cravings when shown pictures of cigarettes, compared to those who didn't exercise.

### BONES

Both resistance training and high-impact exercise can build bone mineral density (BMD), staving off osteoporosis. However, high-impact sports, like running, do a better job since multidirectional, dynamic movements produce greater gains in bone strength, finds a University of Missouri study.

### COLON

A review of 52 studies found that people who engaged in five to six hours of brisk walking per week were 24% less likely to develop colon cancer than those who exercised less than 30 minutes a week.

### BREASTS

German researchers found that regular exercisers reduce their risk of developing breast cancer after menopause by one-third, compared to women who do little exercise, since they have lower estrogen levels—which translates to a lower chance of developing the disease.

### ARE YOU A DOC WHO HAS NO TIME TO TALK EXERCISE?

EIM's website ([www.exerciseismedicine.org](http://www.exerciseismedicine.org)) contains educational materials and toolkits for physicians to use in their practices. "Make sure your team of nurses and physician assistants are informed about exercise counseling, so if you're really pressed for time, they can educate the patients," Peeke advises. (The Rx she wrote out is still tacked on her patient's fridge.)

### TREND ALERT: THE HEALTHIEST PAIR

Step out of a hospital gown and into workout clothes if your hospital is connected with a gym. Across the country, health clubs and hospitals are uniting to offer recovering patients rehab clinics, physical therapy and exercise treatment programs in a fitness club setting, while under the supervised care of fitness professionals and on-site physicians who specialize in anything from podiatry to diabetes education. How's that for a literal meaning of "exercise is medicine"?

FITNESS EXPRESS! 3 ROUTINES TO GET A LEAN BODY

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