



How to Get Computer Gamers More Active

Do you or your child spend a lot of time playing computer games? Consider getting a Nintendo Wii™. Two studies tested various Wii

games to determine their energy requirements for college students and older adults, respectively. The college students played Wii Boxing and Tennis, and performed Wii Fit exercises, while the older adults only played Wii Bowling.

For the college students, only Wii Boxing increased heart rate enough to classify the activity as “moderate-intensity.” Although that level meets basic physical activity recommendations set forth by the U.S. government and the American College of Sports medicine (ACSM), researchers say it might still not be intense enough for some.

Someone with average fitness level or higher will probably have to

do something beyond playing these games to increase their aerobic capacity, according to Elizabeth DiRico, MS, the study’s lead researcher. However, interactive fitness programs such as the Wii Fit “could be a way for sedentary people to get started with exercise,” she says. “It also provides fit individuals with the opportunity to increase their overall daily physical activity.”

Conversely, in the older adults study, Wii Bowling significantly increased heart rate in participants, as well as boosted mood and helped them feel refreshed and energized.

“Older adults often have a difficult time starting a fitness routine later in life,” said Lucas Wiloughby, ACSM Certified Health/Specialist. “Active game-playing might help them see that exercise isn’t about just hitting the treadmill. It can be fun and socially enjoyable, too.”



Wii Bowling
©Nintendo

A lot of kids are getting their grandparents up out of their chairs to play Wii together. You could take the lead – and save hundreds of dollars – by planning fun fitness activities for your family.

- Consider everyone’s interests and abilities when planning activities.
- Spend as much time as possible outdoors.
- Emphasize having fun and learning. It doesn’t matter who wins. Just for fun, play a game without keeping score.
- Help each family member find an activity he or she feels good about. Success breeds self-esteem.
- Set short-term and long-term fitness goals, and work toward them. A long-term goal could be to hike to the top of a mountain. A short-term goal might be to learn how to play croquet.
- Reward with a fun physical activity such as swimming or ice-skating, rather than with food or a sedentary activity such as going to a movie.

Invite relatives, friends, and neighbors to join you from time to time. Plan a softball game in the park, for example.

American College of Sports Medicine. 2009.

Get more ideas with Shape Up America, available at: <http://shapeup.org/fittips/download1.php>

Eat for a Healthy Brain

Emerging research on nutrition and brain function shows definite benefits to eating a balanced diet and a wide variety of nutrients. Specific foods may have a favorable effect on brain function through anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and other biochemical activities. Here are some foods that might help you think more clearly and have a better memory:

- Strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, and other berries
- Vitamin D, obtained through foods such as fish and fortified milk, and from sun exposure
- Omega-3s, found in fatty fish such as salmon and halibut, and in other foods such as eggs

- Healthy fats (polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats), such as in olive and canola oils, nuts, and avocados
- Green tea

Future research will help us understand more clearly the role that specific foods and dietary supplements play in brain health and overall health.



Maturitas. June 9, 2009.

Nutritional Neuroscience. June 2009.

Nature: Clinical Practice Neurology. March 2009.

Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry. July 2009.

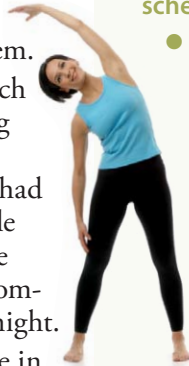
Lack of Sleep Raises Blood Pressure



Worldwide, more than 7 million deaths occur each year due to high blood pressure. In the United States, 1/3 of adults have high blood pressure. New research indicates that lack of adequate sleep could be contributing to this widespread health problem.

A recent 5-year study found that for each lost hour of sleep, the risk of developing high blood pressure increased by 37%. Most people who slept at least 7 hours had the best health. In another study, people who slept 5 hours daily were 60% more likely to develop high blood pressure compared to people who slept 7-8 hours a night. If you want to keep your blood pressure in the healthy range (less than 120/80), aim for at least 7-8 hours of sleep daily. Taking a midday nap can also be helpful in reaching your 7-8 hours.

Archives of Internal Medicine. June 8, 2009. Hypertension. May 1, 2006.



Can't catch your Zzzzzz?

- The most important thing to do is to **set a sleep schedule** and stick to it.
- **Exercise daily.** Since evening exercise can keep you awake, exercise in the morning or early afternoon.
- **Avoid caffeinated drinks** and foods that contain caffeine, such as chocolate.
- **Avoid alcohol**, which can disrupt sleep patterns and delay the onset of sleep.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight increases the risk of snoring, sleep apnea, and other sleep disorders.
- **Have a light dinner.** Eating too much before you go to bed can

lead to heartburn and poor digestion and disrupt sleep.

- **Reserve the last few hours of your day for calm activities.** Avoid playing competitive games (even chess or cards), watching exciting programs on television, and reading suspenseful books.
- **Assess your life.** Are you stressed? Could you be depressed? If so, consider consulting with a health professional.

If you can't get to sleep within 20 minutes, get up. Stay in dark or dimly lit rooms and do something repetitive or boring until you feel sleepy. Some people consider middle-of-the-night insomnia a perfect opportunity for reading the owner's manual for any household electrical appliance.

National Institutes of Health. 2009.

How to Minimize the Negative Effects of Flying

It takes about an hour to recover for each time zone you cross while flying. A transcontinental flight spanning 5 time zones requires about 5 hours of recovery. But there are some ways to minimize the negative effects of flying and help keep you energetic after your flight:

- Beginning a week or so before your trip, **adjust your bedtime** an hour a day to accommodate the change in time zones.
- **Include some strength-building exercises** in your routine to make sure you are strong enough to lift and haul all those suitcases.
- **Take short brisk walks** while waiting at the airport.
- **Set your watch to local time** as soon as you board the plane.
- For long flights – particularly when flying east – **try to sleep on the plane** to account for lost sleep.
- If you can't get a full night of sleep, **try to take a short nap** once you reach your destination. Just 15-20

minutes can benefit the brain.

- **Walk around during the flight**, and do light stretching.
- **Stay well-hydrated** by drinking water, 100% fruit drinks, and sports drinks.
- **Avoid alcohol** while traveling. It is dehydrating, acts as a depressant, and can worsen your jet lag symptoms. (If you are nervous about flying, ask your doctor about ways you can relax and make it through the flight.)
- **Eat healthfully**, but lightly – and at regular intervals during your trip. Rushing to catch your flight, lugging a heavy suitcase through terminals, sitting in a cramped seat for a long time, experiencing flight delays, and dealing with crowds and noise can be stressful so be sure to begin your trip well-rested and anticipate delays and inconveniences. Slip a good book, a few healthy snacks, and other essentials (e.g., underwear and prescriptions in case your luggage



is lost) into your carry-on bag. You might not be able to do anything about the screaming child on your flight, but you can wear earplugs!

Flighthealth.org. 2009.

American College of Sports Medicine. 2009.

ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

Q: Is a high-protein diet the best way to lose weight?

A: Go to www.wellsourc.info/wn/ask-highprotein.pdf to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: well@wellsourc.com, subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.