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Research and Extension

# Walk Kansas

*celebrate healthy living*

www.WalkKansas.org  
Newsletter 7 • 2016

## Functional Fitness

Functional fitness exercises train your muscles to work together, and they simulate common movements you do in everyday life, such as carrying groceries, gardening, housework, daily chores, and playing games and sports with your children and grandchildren. Functional exercise training can also improve balance, flexibility, muscle strength, agility, and help reduce the risk of falls.

Functional exercises often require you to use muscles in your upper and lower body at the same time, which helps improve core stability and strength. A good example of a functional exercise is the squat, because it trains muscles you use to rise up and down from a chair or pick up objects from the floor. Here are three effective functional exercises to get you started.

### 1. Squats

This is one of the most beneficial exercises, particularly for your lower body. The movement simply mimics the motion to sit on a chair or low stool. It is important to perform this exercise correctly to prevent injuries, especially to your knees.

Your hips should guide your movement while doing a squat. Keep your knees stacked above your ankles and toes pointed straight ahead as you squat. As you do this exercise, push through your heels, squeeze your glutes and engage your core muscles.

These videos offer specific instructions for doing a standing squat and other versions of the exercise with weight. The instructors address common mistakes people make when doing this exercise as well as modifications to try if the movement is difficult for you.

[Standing Squat](#)  
[Dumbbell Deadlift](#)  
[Goblet Squat](#)

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## 2. Lunges

Basically, a lunge is an exaggeration of a walking gait. It can be helpful to use some type of stick, such as a mop handle, for stability. Transfer the stability stick from one hand to the other between each step. From a standing position, take a large step forward, then bend the knees deeply to lower and raise the weight of your body. This video demonstrates the lunge.

[Walking Lunge](#)

## 3. Push Ups

You probably remember this classic exercise from gym class in school. As you do a push up, keep your elbows tight to the body and push yourself up without locking elbows at the top. Tighten your core muscles so your midsection is not sagging toward the ground.

If push ups on the floor are too difficult for you, start by pushing against a wall while standing, then

use a countertop, next a lower stable surface, and finally the floor. Push ups with a stability ball are another option, as demonstrated in these videos.

[Basic Push Ups \(with ball\)](#)

[Push Ups: The Next Level](#)

All of these videos and more can be found at [www.walkkansas.org](http://www.walkkansas.org) in the Physical Activity section, Exercise Basics and Strength Training pages.



## Mediterranean-style Eating Pattern

Studies show that Mediterranean-style diets are remarkably connected with good health, which is the basis for including this eating pattern in the recently revised [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). Mediterranean eating patterns are associated with longevity and may decrease your risk for heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and even Alzheimer's disease.

The Mediterranean-style diet is reflective of a way of eating that is traditional in countries that surround the Mediterranean Sea. The diet is rich in vegetables, fruits, nuts, beans and peas, whole grains, olive oil and fish. Instead of excess salt, Mediterranean-style foods are flavored with herbs. Sweets are enjoyed in small amounts.

Here are simple ideas for eating the Mediterranean way.

- » **Eat seafood twice a week.** Tuna, herring, salmon, and sardines are rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Shellfish have similar benefits for brain and heart health. When you eat meat, choose smaller amounts.

- » **Enjoy a vegetarian meal one night a week or more.** Include beans and legumes, whole grains, and vegetables flavored with herbs and spices.
- » **Choose healthy fats,** such as extra-virgin olive oil, avocados, nuts, sunflower seeds, olives, and peanuts.
- » **Pile on vegetables.** These are vitally important to Mediterranean-style eating. Start with a simple plate of sliced fresh tomatoes drizzled with olive oil and feta cheese. Enjoy salads, greens, soups and stews, healthful pizzas, and oven roasted veggies.
- » **Switch to whole grains.** They taste nuttier and have more fiber. Traditional Mediterranean grains include bulgur, barley, farro, brown rice, and products made with whole-grain flour.
- » **Make fruit your dessert.** Enjoy a wide range of delicious fresh fruits and pair with cheese or yogurt.

## The Skinny on Dietary Fats

Fats in our diet can be found in both plant and animal foods. We need some fats in our diet because they provide essential fatty acids and vitamin E. However, not all fat is the same. The newly revised Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that we replace solid fats with oils.

Oils are part of a healthy eating pattern and include canola, corn, olive, peanut, safflower, soybean, and sunflower oils. Healthful oils are also naturally present in nuts, seeds, seafood, olives, and avocados. The recommendation for oils is approximately 5 to 6 teaspoons/day.

The type of fat to limit in your diet is anything that is solid or semisolid at room temperature. This includes all trans fats, such as shortening, and saturated fats. Coconut, palm kernel, and palm oil also fall into this category. They are called oils because they come from plants; however, they are considered solid fats for nutritional purposes.

For more information on fats and oils, go to <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/oils>

## Success from Walk Kansas 2016

I have been trying to do the yoga videos (at [www.walkkansas.org](http://www.walkkansas.org)) along with the strength ones on balance, about three times a week. It has made so much difference in my flexibility. When I planted garden, all the bending and stretching did not bother me. This past week, I [measured] the shot put at two different high school track meets. It requires bending over or squatting to read the tape measure many times. I felt it a little, but not as bad as if I had not been stretching! I hope I can keep this up, because it helps everything, my back too.

— Janice Hershberger, River Valley District (Clay County)

## Greek-Style Scampi with Zoodles

*"Zoodles" are zucchini that are spiral cut to look like noodles. This recipe includes whole grain pasta and zoodles. The dish can be gluten-free by increasing the amount of zoodles and omitting the pasta.*

Serves 4

### Ingredients:

6 ounces uncooked thin spaghetti pasta, whole grain  
2 teaspoons olive oil, divided  
½ cup chopped green bell pepper  
½ cup chopped onion  
2 teaspoons minced garlic  
1 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes  
½ cup sliced mushrooms  
1 small zucchini, spiral cut into zoodles  
¼ cup sliced ripe olives  
1 pound peeled and deveined shrimp  
1 teaspoon dried oregano  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil  
⅛ teaspoon ground red pepper  
⅛ teaspoon black pepper  
6 tablespoons crumbled feta cheese

### Instructions:

1. Cook pasta according to package directions, omitting salt and fat. Drain and keep warm.
2. Heat 1 teaspoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add green bell pepper and onions, saute for 2 minutes. Add garlic, tomatoes, red pepper, and black pepper, and cook 1 minute. Add shrimp and cook 3 minutes or until shrimp are done.
3. In a small skillet, heat remaining teaspoon oil over medium-high heat. Add zucchini, mushrooms, and olives; saute for 2 minutes.
4. To serve, divide pasta onto 4 plates, layer zoodle mixture and then tomato/shrimp mix. Top with 1½ tablespoons Feta cheese.



**Nutrition Information for 1 serving:**  
340 calories  
7 g fat  
540 mg sodium  
39 g carbohydrates  
33 g protein  
5 g fiber



## Being Mindful In Eating Habits Can Contribute To a Healthier Lifestyle

*As a Walk Kansas participant, you have been focusing on being mindful in your lifestyle habits. Here are some tips from a K-State Research and Extension specialist who discusses the benefits of being attentive toward **eating habits** and learning to avoid negative messages.*

It's common for people trying to lose weight by restricting their diets to struggle in keeping the weight off, according to Sandy Procter, assistant professor in [Kansas State University's College of Human Ecology](#). Practicing mindful eating can be much more beneficial.

To be **mindful** means simply being present in the moment without judgment, and having mindful eating habits helps amplify our body's signals of hunger and fullness, break old eating habits and better understand what our body is saying, Procter said.

"We often don't take time to listen to our bodies," said Procter, also a nutrition specialist and dietitian with [K-State Research and Extension](#). "Mindfulness is a big part of eating well, but also of healthfulness in general." She outlined several ways a person can eat more mindfully and develop healthier habits.

### 1. Shift Your Thinking

Procter's first suggestion is to shift away from automatic eating, which can help prevent disordered eating patterns and move closer to more regular eating habits. Be deliberate about *why* you're eating, *when* you eat, and other factors such as *portion sizes*.

"It's good to be aware of how we eat, to shift out of this auto-eating and think about what we eat every day," Procter said. "Don't just do things automatically because the clock says it's time to eat, or because you've always used a giant bowl for your cereal. Sit back and think, 'This is what I want; this is what I feel like I need, and I think when I'm done (eating).'"

### 2. Avoid multitasking while eating

People tend to eat less if they're only focusing on the meal and are more aware of their hunger signals. Attentive eating might require planning healthy meals ahead of time, planning what snacks to eat during the day, taking a proper amount of time to eat and even sharing meals with someone who is also practicing mindful eating.

### 3. Avoiding negative messages

"Sometimes we are our own worst enemies, and we can say negative thoughts to ourselves," Procter said, adding that by actively disregarding thoughts such as wanting to skip a meal due to their weight, people avoid internal stressors that can influence their eating habits.

When experiencing negative messages about eating habits or weight, avoid vocalizing them. Studies have shown that young children will repeat messages they hear, she said, and when hearing adults speaking critically of eating habits or of certain foods, children can have these negative messages imprinted upon them.

"You hear a lot of this 'mindful' speech and the messages we inadvertently send children if we're always talking about, 'I'm not going to eat that because it's fattening,' or, 'I'm not going to drink milk because it's fattening,' or, 'I weigh too much, so I'm going to skip this meal.'"

### 4. External support

Procter said having a support system to assist with mindful eating can be helpful.

"When we're trying to change habits, it's important to find those who are going to support us," Procter said. It's also better to make gradual small changes than sudden big ones, she added. By taking gradual steps such as being more mindful of eating habits and adding in small bursts of physical activity, people can work toward overall healthier habits.