

## How long does it take to lose fitness?

Congratulations on completing Walk Kansas! While the formal program has come to an end, we hope your healthy lifestyle habits will continue. If you have been walking or doing some other type of aerobic activity, and adding strengthening exercises twice a week, you probably have noticed that many of your daily activities are easier, that you have more stamina and endurance, and you feel stronger.

So, what happens if you hit the “pause” button on your daily walks and strengthening exercises? It depends. Most participants in this program likely fall into the category of a recreational exerciser and it would take 2 to 4 weeks of inactivity before you see real change in your fitness level.

If you stop exercising, the first change you will notice is a decline in your aerobic fitness. You’ll notice that you get out of breath more quickly when climbing stairs or walking longer distances. While cardio conditioning falls faster than strength, it is easier to regain. It is also important to remember that taking time off from exercise once in a while can be a good thing, and a good exercise routine includes rest days.

The effect of inactivity on your muscle strength and endurance will be slight during the first few weeks. After that, your muscles will not feel as firm and you will notice a decline in muscle strength. The effect inactivity has on your waistline is based on input and output. When you exercise, you burn more calories. If you stop being active, you will need to reduce calories to avoid weight gain.



Other factors play a role in how quickly you lose health benefits after you stop exercising. When comparing adults who were either 20 to 30 years old or 65 to 75 years old, the older adults lost fitness gains almost twice as fast as the younger set. Also, trauma of injury or illness will cause you to lose strength at a higher rate than average.

The good news is that if you have fallen out of your routine, you can regain fitness and health benefits simply by being active again!

The Walk Kansas program is designed to be a catalyst for change — to nudge you to be more active for at least 8 weeks.

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## Coming Next Year

Walk Kansas 2018

March 17 – May 12

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Walk Kansas

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Hopefully, you have experienced how much better you feel when you are more active every day. This feeling of improved health is called “intrinsic” motivation. Because you feel better, you are motivated to continue a more active lifestyle. Your motivation to be active is internal (how you feel) rather than external (motivated by prizes or things). Internal motivation is much more powerful, and the lifestyle changes you make, as a result, will last longer.

As always, we welcome your thoughts and suggestions on how we can make Walk Kansas better each year. Please complete this [online survey](#) or ask your local extension office for a paper version to provide your responses. We are already planning for 2018, and your timely response is important to us!

Have a wonderful summer — be active and be well!

### **Sharolyn Flaming Jackson**

*Family and Consumer Sciences Specialist  
State Walk Kansas Coordinator*

## The Best Post-Workout Food

After a strenuous workout, it is important to refuel muscles with carbohydrates and protein, but you don't need anything fancy to accomplish this. Research has found that low-fat chocolate milk contains the ideal carbohydrate-to-protein ratio that is needed, and it is recommended by the American Council on Exercise. One cup (8 ounces) of chocolate milk provides 8 grams of protein and 22 grams of carbohydrates. Most people already like the taste of chocolate milk, plus it is easy to find and inexpensive.

So, enjoy chocolate milk as the best post-workout food!

## Celebrate Mediterranean Diet Month

May is International Mediterranean Diet Month and a good time to take a look at the foods and lifestyles that make up this remarkable way of eating. The Mediterranean Diet is recognized for its role in heart health, and this eating pattern also reduces risk for type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, and reduces risk for some cancers.

Greece, Italy, and its neighbors provide the foundation for the traditional Mediterranean diet. There are many familiar foods to choose from, and you will also discover some surprising additions that boost flavor, texture, and variety. Here are tips to eat and live the Mediterranean way.

- » Build your plate around vegetables and fruit. Start with vegetables that are easy to find, such as tomatoes, corn, potatoes, and leafy greens. Enjoy fresh ingredients that are grown locally. Dip raw vegetables in hummus and enjoy fresh fruit for dessert, along with a piece of quality cheese and nuts.
- » Think beyond meat proteins. The main proteins in the Mediterranean diet are fish, eggs, and plant proteins, with moderate amounts of chicken and small portions of lean red meat. Eating the Mediterranean way means eliminating as many processed and fast foods as possible. Snack on unsalted nuts and seeds.
- » Staples include chickpeas, lentils, and other beans. These are budget friendly and so good for you. They are packed with fiber and a host of nutrients. Add them to salads, soups, and one-pot meals.
- » Choose whole grain foods. Enjoy oats, whole-wheat bread, brown rice, and whole-grain pasta.
- » Boost flavor with herbs and spices. The Mediterranean diet is full of flavor. Grow your own herbs, indoors or outside, so have them on hand. Swap what you grow in your garden with your neighbors. Choose basil, marjoram, oregano, rosemary, tarragon, mint, and thyme. Harissa is a spice mixture commonly used in Mediterranean cooking and is available as a paste or spice powder version. All of these will pump up flavor!
- » Keep portions moderate. Eat a variety of foods, preferably fresh, and in smaller portions. Eating the Mediterranean way means to eat slowly and savor your food. This eating style also promotes a healthy weight.
- » Embrace cooking as a joy. Cook with family and friends, then sit down to eat together. The Mediterranean lifestyle also includes plenty of physical activity, often enjoyed with family and friends.

How Mediterranean is your diet? [Take this fun quiz to find out.](#)



# Health Quest Credit for Walk Kansas

If you have the state employee health plan (SEHP) benefits, you are eligible to receive Health Quest rewards for participating in Walk Kansas. This program is considered a "Wellness Challenge" and worth 4 Health Quest credits.

In order to receive these credits, you will need to provide information (first/last name and Employee ID #) [through this survey](#).

The survey will remain open through May 17, and you can also submit information for a spouse that is participating. You must also log minutes of activity online to show participation before credits will be awarded.

If you are not able to submit information through the survey link, have questions, or need to submit this information after May 17, please contact Sharolyn Jackson at 785-532-2273, [sharolyn@ksu.edu](mailto:sharolyn@ksu.edu).



## HealthQuest

state employee health plan

# Chickpea Greek Salad

*Makes 8 servings*

### Ingredients:

- 1 15-ounce can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 yellow bell pepper, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- ½ small red onion, chopped
- 15 grape tomatoes, halved (about 1 cup)
- 1/3 cup pitted Kalamata olives
- 1 medium cucumber, sliced and quartered
- 2 ounces feta cheese, crumbled

### Dressing:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- Salt and pepper, to taste

### Directions:

1. Place all ingredients in a large bowl and toss to combine.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, and oregano. Combine dressing with salad, toss well to combine. Add salt and pepper, to taste.
3. Salad can be enjoyed immediately or refrigerate to allow flavors to blend. The flavor of this salad peaks about 2 days after making.

**Nutrition Information per serving:** 110 calories; 4.5 g fat; 13 g carbohydrates; 5 g protein; 4 g fiber; 170 mg sodium.





***Time to Celebrate!***

During the past 8 weeks, you have challenged yourselves as members of a *Walk Kansas* team. I hope that you have done more... more activity....more fruits/vegetables... more water...more to help you celebrate food, fitness, and healthy living! Congratulations to you and your team - enjoy a celebration and have a great summer!

