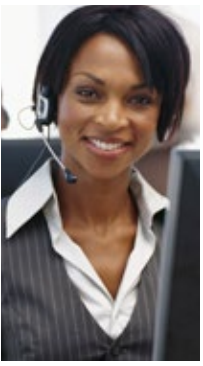
BalanceHealth℠ Newsletter

August 2016 | Written by the wellness experts at eni



Let's Take a Ride

Late summer and fall provide the perfect weather for taking a bike ride. Cycling is a fun aerobic exercise that engages the legs, while still being easy on the joints, and lets you get outside and enjoy the fresh air. Cycling has a number of physical, mental, and even environmental benefits.

Physical Health Benefits

Cycling is great cardio. The aerobic nature of riding a bike gets your heart pumping, which is great for your cardiovascular system and overall wellbeing. Incorporate in a few bike rides per week to reach the American Heart Association's recommendation for improving cardiovascular health, which is at least 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise or 75 minutes per week of vigorous exercise.

Cycling can help people lose weight or maintain a healthy weight. According to NutriStrategy, even a leisurely bike ride burns up to 281 calories per hour, compared to a relaxing stroll, which burns up to 176 calories per hour. To really pump up the calorie burn, include lots of hills in your bike route and try to maintain speeds above 10 miles per hour.

Cycling is a great lower body workout. It's a fun way to build the muscles in your legs and glutes. The day after your first long intense bike ride, your muscles will definitely be burning!

Cycling is easy on your joints. It is a great low impact aerobic activity that really engages your muscles without placing excessive force on your legs, ankles, knees, and feet. Because cycling is low impact, it can be great when recovering from an injury or if you just want to preserve the longevity of your joints. Cycling can also be enjoyed well into our golden years, so it can serve as a lifelong way to exercise.

Mental/Emotional Health Benefits

It's fun! Remember how much you loved riding your bike as a kid, well it's just as fun now. Sometimes working out can feel like a chore, which makes it easy to find excuses to skip it. When people look forward to their exercise routine, they are much more likely to stick with it. In contrast to some more traditional workouts, cycling is simply an enjoyable way to spend your leisure time, burning calories and building muscles are just nice side effects.

Cycling is great for stress relief. Exercise in general raises endorphins and reduces stress and anxiety, cycling is no

For more information or advice about cycling, contact your Wellness Coordinator by calling:

1.800.327.2255

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exception. In fact, a New Economics Foundation study found that bike commuters have reported lower stress levels than their counterparts using cars and mass transit.

It can be an adventure. Cycling is a great way to explore your neighborhood, town, or city. If you have a mountain bike, you can also grab a buddy and hit the trails to explore nature. Getting outside and taking in the sights and sounds around you can be very restorative for body and mind.

You can incorporate riding your bike into your charitable endeavors. There are countless bike race events (similar to 5K or 10K runs) that raise money for great causes such as cancer research or supporting local charitable organizations.

It's great for the environment. Cycling is a completely green form of transportation. When possible, take your bike instead of driving your car. This will reduce your carbon footprint and help you burn some calories.

Types of Bikes

If you do want to incorporate bike riding into your active lifestyle, there are many different types to choose from. Here are a few popular styles to consider, courtesy of nbda.com:

Mountain Bikes. These are rugged bikes built for off-road use, but many people ride them on pavement as well. Mountain bikes feature fat knobby tires for comfort and traction, flat bars for great control, and low gears for easier hill climbing. Some mountain bikes have suspension for increased shock absorption.

Road Bikes. These are meant for pavement riding, and are built for speed. They have narrower tires and drop bars for a more aerodynamic position.

Hybrid Bikes. These are a cross between mountain bikes and road bikes. Hybrids generally have treaded tires which are narrower than mountain bike tires, flat bars, and higher gearing than mountain bikes. They're not quite as fast as road bikes on pavement, and not quite as rugged as mountain bikes on the road. They are good for commuting and offer a compromise which appeals to many casual riders.

Comfort Bikes. These are specialized mountain bikes or hybrids with more upright riding positions, softer saddles, and lower gearing. They are built for comfort, but are also designed to perform well.

Recumbent/Tandem/Electric Assist Bikes. There are numerous "niche" bicycles available today. Recumbents allow people to ride in a "recliner-chair" position with feet forward. Tandems allow two riders on a bike. Also, a number of companies are offering bicycles with electric-assist motors.

Remember that **eni's** Wellness Coaches are available to provide our members with additional information on the health benefits of cycling, riding tips, and hints for choosing the best bike to fit your lifestyle. Happy riding!

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