What is the first thing you think of when you hear the word “exercise”?

- I don’t have time to exercise;
- I’m just too tired to exercise; or
- Exercise doesn’t count unless I can do at least one-half hour at a time.

If you think exercise only means going to the gym or running a mile or participating in some sport that requires perspiration, perhaps you can substitute the word “activity” to put exercise into a more positive perspective. You don’t need to engage in an activity for long periods of time or at high intensity for it to be beneficial to your health.

Try thinking:
If I get to work a few minutes early, I can take the long route from the parking lot or bus stop to the office. I will increase my daily activity, get a 5- or 10-minute walk, and gain health benefits. This is great; I am doing something good for myself with little time and effort.

If I’m feeling sluggish, I can take a 5-minute walk, increase my energy level, and improve my attitude. Activity produces energy, and once I get started, I may find myself walking for 15 or 20 minutes and enjoying it.

It takes only a few minutes a day to become more physically active. Regularly finding just two 15-minute or three 10-minute periods a day to engage in physical activity will give you more energy, as well as help tone your muscles, burn calories, and control your appetite.
Other ways to incorporate activity into your day:

- Walk your children to school or the bus stop.
- If you are a TV watcher – get up and march in place during the commercials.
- Learn to fidget – pace when you are on the phone or swing your legs when you are seated at your desk.
- Take the steps instead of the elevator or escalator.
- When shopping at the mall, take each purchase to your car before going to the next store.
- Enjoy leisure activities that include walking, such as going to the zoo or museum instead of to the movies.
- Get off the bus a stop early and walk to your destination.
- Combine activity with sedentary pleasures, such as walking on a treadmill or riding a stationary bike while you watch TV or talk on the phone.
- Move your feet, not your fingers. Rather than e-mailing or phoning a colleague, deliver your message in person.
- Drink lots of water, and you will need to make trips to the restroom.
- Save money on fuel by parking at the back of the lot instead of driving around looking for a space close to the door.