

Something to Share, February 2009

Spotted in The Observer Magazine, 21 February 2009, by myself and some of my students, was this question and answer:

I read that all we need to do to stay fit and healthy is to cycle or run up stairs as fast as we can for 30 seconds, four times in four minutes, twice a week. What do you think?

This comes from the Department of Exercise Biology at Heriot-Watt University. It surprised the researchers just as much as GPs like myself. They found that short bursts of activity improved the sensitivity of organs and cells to insulin. Loss of sensitivity to insulin, thereby increasing glucose levels in the blood and preventing it from being used by the tissues, is the main cause of Type 2 diabetes (which includes most adult-onset diabetes). Improving insulin sensitivity should help prevent the disease and lower our risk of heart attacks, strokes and other circulation problems. As it is only one report, we need to know more before we can unequivocally recommend it. Dr Tom Smith

Chris Hocking says:

This does sound intriguing. Intuitively I feel they will go on to prove it, or something very similar.

Here's how you could integrate the main idea into everyday life:

- A) Walk up fixed stairs two at a time. Expect to be a little out of breath when you reach the top. As your stamina improves you'll be looking for taller buildings! Please pay attention to leg alignment and keep 'navel to spine' throughout this activity. You will need to 'track' your feet and knees correctly with your hip joint. Tummy hanging out? "Go home and put your feet up." You absolutely must not let your tummy muscles go slack when climbing!
- B) Walk briskly up escalators. Do not stop until you reach the top. Some of the deeper underground stations have pretty challenging escalators. Again, 'track' the legs and keep your tummy pulled in, especially towards the top when getting tired
- C) Tired, sluggish, ready to collapse? Do A) or B) instead of drinking coffee or eating chocolate. As explained in the article, the trick is to release energy in a form that can be used, into body tissue and not store "unused excess" as fat. A) or B) will "wake you up" in the best possible way.

Start today! Turn your journey to and from work into something positive. Re-energise!

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