



# One Less Couch Potato

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I don't have the time. I don't have enough money. I don't have the right gear. And after a full day at work and chauffeuring three teenagers around in the evenings, I certainly don't have enough energy to exercise! No doubt many of you can identify with these excuses. You, like me, are probably more than happy to sit yourself in front of the TV with a coffee once the kids are in for the night and the chores done.

As Christians, we know our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and, as intelligent human beings, we know that physical exercise has a

positive effect on our health and quality of life. Yet we still don't make exercising a priority.

Well let me tell you, there is now one less 'couch potato' in the world since I have made a pact between myself and God to blow the dust off my trainers and start exercising — no excuses.

I am 48 years of age, married with three teenage children, have been in full-time ministry for 23 years in corps work and currently have a DHQ appointment.

Until the time I entered full-time ministry I was heavily involved with sport at both school and

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club level. Even in the training college I swam twice a week and played netball with other women cadets. So what went wrong? What changed? I think I became so involved in my ministry and family life that I forgot to make time for myself. That is until the beginning of this year, when due to illness I was forced to reflect on the lack of balance in my work and life.

Realising again the need to look after my God designed physical well-being, and remembering

how good I used to feel after exercising, I decided to take responsibility for my body. I stopped moaning. I stopped making excuses. I began walking, then jogging, and then going to the indoor swimming pool for a weekly swim.

I rediscovered the benefits of regular physical exercise and I feel better because of this. I now enjoy reduced stress levels. Improved blood flow throughout my body increases my concentration and I don't feel slow and sluggish. Increased production of endorphins improves my mood.

I feel well, fitter and happier than I did. I have more energy and am better able to cope with the demands of full-time ministry and being a mother and a wife. And the good news is that these benefits stay with me all the time, not just when I am exercising.

If you are like me, with children and limited funds, remember that walking and jogging are free. You can become a stair-person instead of using the elevator, or ask for a fitness/dance DVD or video for your birthday.

You could buy your family a joint Christmas present this year and invest in Wii Fit. Or, instead of sitting down at lunch time you could go for a walk before eating, or dig out your bike and go for a ride. Trust me. You'll feel good!

## **How do you know if you're a couch potato?** Take the COUCH POTATO QUIZ

### **1. Which of these would you spend your money on?**

- a Burger and fries
- b Exercise DVD
- c 10-year membership to nearest gym — entire family package!

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**2. You sleep in on a Saturday until**

- a The alarm rings for your 4 am run
- b You have to get up and do stuff
- c You can't be bothered to get up

**3. How long do you spend watching TV each night?**

- a None — TV is for losers
- b Less than three hours
- c I surrender — more than five hours

**4. Which exercise class would you join?**

- a Extreme military assault course
- b Walking class
- c Exercise? What's that?

**5. You have two hours before you need to meet a friend. What do you do?**

- a Go to sleep
- b Tidy the house
- c Run a half-marathon

**If you scored between:**

**5-8** You are a real couch potato. Step away from the remote control and put on your trainers. Find a way to increase the steps you take in a day by taking the stairs or by walking to the supermarket. Even a little exercise will increase your energy and help you break away from the couch of despair.

**9-12** You have a healthy attitude towards exercise, Way to go! If you wish to improve your health even further, find ways to give a boost to your exercise routine. If you are in a rut, try something new for a change, Perhaps you can increase your distance ... annoy the neighbour's dog and see how far it chases you.



**13-15** You really love exercise and are probably in great shape! However, as with all good things, there is the danger of over-exercise — you could be doing too much. Achy joints? Trouble sleeping at night? Perhaps you should take a break. Always remember to take a day of rest once a week.

**Scores for the answers**

- 1 a - 1; 1b - 2; 1c - 3;
- 2 a - 3; 2b - 2; 2c - 1;
- 3 a - 3; 3b - 2; 3c - 1;
- 4 a - 3; 4b - 2; 4c - 1;
- 5 a - 1; 5b - 2; 5c - 3

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