NorCal Feds FitTip #1:
Why Fitness?

In my first Fitness Tip I thought I would take the opportunity of the New Year to discuss, what is probably for many of us, a New Year's resolution – To "Get Fit" and Lose Weight...

This is the first in a series of Fitness Tips. I will begin with 5 excellent reasons to start a fitness program, for those of us that may need an extra "push" to get started, and then move to more specific tips concerning fitness and nutrition in the weeks and months that follow.

Consider the following benefits that a healthy diet and moderate exercise can bring to your life:

1. **Preventative medicine** – Evidence is overwhelming that a balanced diet combined with moderate exercise is one of the best things a person can do for their body. It bolsters the immune system and lowers the risk of heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, LDL (the bad cholesterol), and osteoporosis.

   Sources:
   http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/007165.htm,
   http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/heart-disease-prevention,
   http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory 911 78.html,
   http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/cancer-prevention/CA00024,
   http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3034814,
   http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/reduce-cholesterol/CL00012,
   http://www.nof.org/prevention/exercise.htm)

2. **Improves strength and balance at any age** – As we age our muscle mass decrease and connective tissue becomes less pliable. Several studies have shown that regular strength and balance exercises can slow this aspect of aging and provide for a healthier life free from injuries and falls. Don't wait until you're 90... start now!

   Sources:
   http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/exerciseforseniors.html,
   http://www.nia.nih.gov/healthinformation/publications/exerciseguide

3. **Increase Longevity** – Maintaining or reducing your weight increases longevity. People who gain 20-40 pounds after the age of 18 are 2 1/2 times more likely to die from coronary disease. As we age, our metabolism generally slows and we need to make adjustments in our physical activity and diet to compensate. If we intake 100 calories a day (~1/2 can of regular soda) more than we burn, that equates to about 10 pounds per year weight gain.

   Source: http://ezinearticles.com/?Exercise-Promotes-Longevity&id=114060

4. **Sleep Better and be Happy** – Exercise significantly reduces anxiety, stress and depression, improves mood and feelings of well-being, and improves sleep.

   Sources:
   http://fitness.gov/mentalhealth.htm
   http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/depression-and-exercise/MH00043

5. **Boost your Memory** – Adults who exercise aerobically increase significant amounts of blood flow to the brain which leads to better memory. Aim for at least 30 minutes of aerobic activity a day. If you don't have time for a full workout, squeeze in a few 10-minute walks throughout the day.

   Sources:
   http://www.mayoclinic.org/news2008-rst/4751.html
   http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/memory-loss/HA00001
   http://www.dukehealth.org/healthlibrary/news/41
   http://www.fi.edu/learn/brain/exercise.html#physicalexercise

So – if this wasn't enough to get you motivated, I don't know what will. My next FitTip will cover the elements of a well-rounded fitness program, followed by basic nutrition.

Stay Fit for Life!