

# Exercise Modification is better than No Exercise at all

“Moving Grays Harbor”

By: Maryann Welch

Finding an activity that is enjoyable is a key to becoming and staying physically active. Walking works for me in large part because I can enjoy spending time with a friend. Marnie Schumacher and I have been friends for more than 30 years and for most of that time have been walking partners. We've walked and talked our way through raising our children and now our conversations invariably include our grandchildren!

Over the years our walks have included the Raymond to Chehalis rail bed, two 60-mile, 3-day Breast Cancer walks, an infamous “lost” adventure in the Capital Forest, and long weekends walking in San Francisco, Vancouver and Portland. We pride ourselves on walking in any weather conditions. The challenge is to choose the right gear to accommodate rain, snow, sleet, hail, wind, cold and heat. The most memorable was walking 15 miles in the snow in May near Boston!

Marnie and I are well suited as walking partners because we are able to maintain the same pace and endure similar distance and terrain. This last winter we encountered a new condition. Marnie began to slow her pace on inclines and found the need to stop to catch her breath along the way. The Nordic Walking poles we had learned to

use in January help increase the intensity of walking and Marnie noticed that she couldn't keep up. Being an ARNP, she diagnosed herself with Asthma and went to her doctor to get a prescription for an inhaler that would solve the problem (or so she thought).

Climbing one particularly steep hill on a cold February day, we both became alarmed at her inability to catch her breath. The inhaler wasn't working. This was the signal to go back to her doctor; something had changed. A treadmill test showed extremely high blood pressure upon reaching her target heart rate. When not exerting herself, her blood pressure was normal. Testing revealed no blockages so medication for high blood pressure was prescribed.

During several months of diagnosis and adjusting medication, Marnie curtailed the intensity of her physical activity. It took some persistence on her part to make sure the medication was adjusted to the point that she could walk up Scammel Hill without elevating her blood pressure to a dangerous level. Marnie's persistence was due to the fact that she wanted to resume her past level of activity. Although her symptoms did dictate her activity level for a short period of time, she can now resume her normal walking routine.

A couple of weeks ago we tackled one of our favorite logging road walks with inclines and even used our Nordic walking poles. Marnie did great and felt good. She continues to take medication to control her blood pressure, but has been able to resume her previous level of activity. I'm glad she can continue to walk and talk through life with me. This will help me, too, to maintain my physical activity by doing something I enjoy with a friend I treasure.

Whatever activity you engage in, watch for changes that would signal a

need to consult with your healthcare provider. Work with him/her to reach a diagnosis and then modify your activity accordingly until you are able to resume your normal level of activity.

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“Some symptoms just don’t manifest themselves in conventional ways. I encourage everyone to work with their healthcare provider to pursue answers” states Dr. John Bausher our Health Officer and local physician. He explains “not all people are able to return to their previous level of activity as Marnie did. They can look for modifications and alternatives that fit for their condition. It’s the continuity of activity that’s important.”

If you have an undiagnosed problem that is limiting your activity level I encourage you to make an appointment with your healthcare provider today. Let’s keep “moving, Grays Harbor”.

### **This Week’s Challenge**

For many of you parents out there, fall sports are gearing up...this means less time for you. Instead of watching your child’s practice from the sidelines or in your car, hook up with another parent and go for a walk. This is a great way to get to know each other and form new friendships or strengthen old ones.

Another walking option is to hook up with the Olympians for walks around town. Tuesday, August 22<sup>nd</sup> they will leave Mill Creek Park in Cosmopolis at 7:00 pm for a 3-4 mile walk. Call Pam at 249-3508 for more information or visit their website at <http://users.techline.com/olympians/> .

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*If you have questions about becoming more active or have information about free or low-cost activity in the area, contact the health department at 532-*