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A prescription for exercise

Local residents prove that
the best medicine doesn't
always come in a bottle

MD _____

Signature _____



MORE AND MORE, cardiac exercise and strength training are muscling their way into medical treatment plans—and local residents are seeing the effects.

Exercise has always been part of cardiac care. Now, research is proving that at the appropriate intensity and duration, exercise not only improves symptoms and quality of life—it actually decreases the incidence of disease. Recent studies on breast cancer patients show that survivors experience a 50 percent reduction in mortality and recurrences when they exercise. In other cases, blood sugar levels and blood pressure have dramatically improved. Exercise also decreases depression as effectively as medication and seems to help with autoimmune disorders and Parkinson’s disease.

THE EXERCISE IS MEDICINE™ MOVEMENT

Common sense? Perhaps, but not all healthcare organizations promote exercise as part of treatment plans. Many patients don’t consider it a legitimate form of medication.

The Exercise is Medicine™ movement began as a global advocacy initiative of the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Medical Association. The movement has a clear mission: bring exercise into more conversations between physicians and patients. At Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital (NLFH), this new approach is already available through Wellness 180™, a physician-referred, multidisciplinary exercise program at the hospital’s Health and Fitness Center at the Lake Forest campus.

“In our programs, we’ve seen hundreds of patients use exercise to reduce the impact of disease,” says Jennifer Labovitz, founder of the award-winning Wellness 180™ and the Medical Fitness and Wellness Manager overseeing all medical fitness programs at NLFH.

Labovitz, whose father is a cardiologist, was on the pre-medicine track in college when she became more interested in *preventing* disease. While working as a cardiac rehabilitation manager, she grew tired of seeing patients who could prevent disease—or mitigate its effects—if only an appropriate exercise program had been “prescribed” to them.

“I created Wellness 180™ because we had so many patients in cardiac rehab—many of them younger people who had already had a stroke or bypass surgery—saying things like, ‘I wish I had done this or known about that.’”

WELLNESS 180™ – HOW AND WHY IT WORKS

Wellness 180™ requires a physician’s referral, and is organized around four eight-week phases that start off gradually, build to greater intensity and then transition to maintenance (enrollment in all eight phases is not required). The first phase begins with a private consultation with Labovitz to establish a personalized cardio exercise program. Participants then meet as a group at least two times a week for exercise with a trainer certified by the American College of Sports Medicine. Certification requirements include 2,000 hours of clinical experience and an undergraduate degree in exercise science—a layer of expertise usually not required of trainers at commercial clubs. Each member of the group is then eased into working with an NLFH nutritionist and psychologist to

John Zavitz

LAKE BLUFF

- LOST 30 POUNDS
- RE-GAINED MOTIVATION

I was a high school athlete, a collegiate tennis player and I competed in triathlons. But then I hit some kind of wall. Maybe it was getting older or settling in as a married man with teenage daughters. Whatever the reason, I gradually went from 225 pounds to 263.

But I didn’t know where to start. It felt bad to run, and it hurt to climb stairs. I didn’t even want to swim because I was embarrassed by how my trunks fit. I was seeing a cardiologist [Dr. Elie Lavie of Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital] because of family history and other risk factors, even though I didn’t have heart disease—not yet. Dr. Lavie referred me to Wellness 180™, and I realized I had to take responsibility.

The exercise trainer is incredible, and I got a lot from the support network that develops in the program. The people in my group became friends of mine, and we work out together a few times a week. They have been in the same place as me and understand how I feel, even though we’re very different from each other. It’s easier getting out to the center in the morning when I know that they’re there. The nutritionist didn’t re-teach me how to eat, but I learned a lot about food and that really helped, too.

Now I’m down to 230 and I’m really looking forward to 200 or even lower. Last weekend I played tennis without feeling like I was dying, and I took a run afterwards. My motivation is definitely back. I’m on my last belt hole and my pants scrunch up in the back—It looks awful, but feels great. When I see Dr. Lavie again, I want to say “thank you.”



Sandra Weatherford

CITY??

- ELIMINATED SOME BLOOD PRESSURE MEDICATION
- LOWERED BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS
- LOST 36 POUNDS

I have diabetes and hypertension, partly because of my weight. I’ve started so many diets and weight loss programs. But you’re on your own with those, and it didn’t work for me. Then I saw some materials about Wellness 180™, and I liked the idea that you have a whole team—an exercise trainer, a psychologist and a nutritionist—and you’re with other people.

When I first started, my Hemoglobin 1 Ac [a measure of blood sugar levels] went down from a 7.1 to a 5.3—that’s good news for a diabetic. Now I’m in Phase three of the program, and I’ve eliminated one of my three blood pressure medications and lost 36 pounds. I’ve changed clothing sizes a few times, and I’m looking forward to losing another 10 to 15 pounds.

I’d seen dieticians in the past, but this program gives me a better understanding of how to eat and stay active. I really love the program, especially being able to do it with other people. I’ve learned so much that even when I have a day on my own, I don’t *feel* alone.

Robin Balmes

NORTH CHICAGO

– LOST 20 POUNDS

As a pre-anesthesia nurse here at the hospital, I see patients every day—people my age and a bit older—ending up in surgery because they haven't taken care of themselves. So when I was put on blood pressure medication recently, things seemed to be heading that way for me as well.

I heard about Wellness 180™ and talked to my physician [Dr. Steve Lasin of Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital]. He was thrilled with the idea and gave me a referral.

I think the program is excellent, and I've never been an exercise person. I had tried Weight Watchers in the past. Wellness 180™ is different because it's a whole program—exercise, nutrition, counseling. At first it was hard work, and it took me some time to see results. It helps that you have a trainer encouraging you and pushing you through those difficult parts. The psychologist helped me understand behavior, like eating for reasons that have nothing to do with hunger. I've not only lost weight, I may be able to stop my blood pressure medication at some point.

I have much more energy, and the sessions are precious time that I have to myself each week. With three kids and five grandchildren with me all the time—that's important!



Joseph Restarki

LAKE BLUFF

- DEVELOPED AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE FOLLOWING BACK SURGERIES
- LOWERED BLOOD PRESSURE

I ran around a lot as a kid, but as an adult who had four back operations, I became pretty sedentary. Then I had some poor results from a stress test, and my doctor said I needed to move more. I was in a catch-22—how could I get active without hurting my back?

I thought, 'what the heck—I'm only 63, and I want a good life.' A neighbor told me about Wellness 180™, and it seemed like a good fit: I could start out slowly and push a little harder each time. Working gradually and knowing the hospital was connected to the program made me feel less anxious about my back.

I lost weight initially and then plateaued, but the trainers are very encouraging; they keep you going, get you to work a little harder and emphasize the positive. The camaraderie of the group—combined with one-on-one training—is very effective. The nutritionist helped me a lot, too. I learned about hydration and what foods to cook (I'm the chef at home). Now I think about what I want to *do*, not what I want to eat. I feel like a teenager—all of my measurements have dropped, I'm more toned, and I can work six to eight hours around the house without stopping.

JENNIFER LABOVITZ
Northwestern Lake Forest
Hospital Medical Fitness
and Wellness Manager



“We've seen hundreds of patients use exercise to reduce the impact of disease.”

learn about and address their diet and behavioral needs. These multidisciplinary components are incorporated into the sessions—they don't require separate appointments.

MEDICAL FITNESS VS. “WORKING OUT”

Labovitz clarifies that a medical fitness program like Wellness 180™ is not rehabilitation, nor is it a disease management like chemotherapy. It's a preventive approach for people on the verge of disease or who have one or more risk factors. They aren't in a life-threatening situation—but they do need to change their lifestyle as soon as possible.

“Unlike commercial clubs, we're integrated with the hospital; we have a medical director, and

trainers with ACSM certification,” says Labovitz. “There's a level of medical oversight that helps patients feel safe. And we're on salary, so you don't have to worry about anyone “selling” the program to you—we're not about that.”

As the personal stories on these pages show, the program works not by drastic food eliminations, tough talk or hours spent alone on a track or treadmill.

“The number one thing I hear about what makes this work is the accountability, knowing there are others in the program and you're in this together,” says Labovitz. “It's not easy at first, and the motivation doesn't happen over night—but we help our clients get there.”

Medical Fitness Programs at Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital

WELLNESS 180™

Two monitored exercise sessions per week, lifestyle coaching, meal plans and behavior modification help you lose weight, decrease blood pressure and lower blood glucose. Program requires physician referral and includes the support of an ASCM-certified exercise trainer, a nutritionist and a clinical psychologist. Wellness 180™ Lite is also available for those needing to lose 5 – 20 pounds.

Winner of the 2010 National Medical Fitness Association's award for Program Innovation.

OTHER MEDICAL FITNESS PROGRAMS:

- Cancer Related Fatigue Program
- Cardiac Rehabilitation Phase IV
- Healthy Body
- Pre/post Natal
- Freedom From Smoking