



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Date: November 19, 2009

Contact: Michaella J. Kumke
Marketing and PR Strategist
402/483-9479 or mkumke@madonna.org

Exercise your right to a healthy, happy holiday season

By Wendy Soenksen, Exercise Physiologist at Madonna ProActive

Lincoln, Neb.—The holidays are fast approaching and everyone is excited for the gifts, goodies and spending time with loved ones. Unfortunately, this busy time of year often brings excess stress to our lives.

Many people admit that when they're under stress healthy habits can be difficult to maintain. Whether it is eating to fill an emotional need, skipping your workout because you're too busy and tired or simply grabbing fast food because there is no time to prepare something healthy, a lifestyle with high levels of stress is rarely a healthy one.

Stress is one of the most overlooked health risks in your daily life. Stress raises the bad cholesterol level in your body as well as your blood pressure, which are both well-known health risk factors. Your body's natural response to stress can also contribute to weight gain. When we experience something stressful our brains release a substance called corticotropin releasing hormone (CRH), which sends our body into its "fight or flight" mode. It also triggers the release of a hormone called cortisol, the body's "stress hormone." An increased level of cortisol in the body will cause an increase in appetite which can lead to weight gain.

Although holiday stress is often hard to avoid, there are ways we can combat the stress and stop the weight gain. Exercise is the best stress buster because it counteracts the negative effects of the stress hormone cortisol and also controls insulin and blood sugar levels. A brief 10-minute walk will be beneficial to bring the stress level down but 30-45 minutes of exercise is recommended. Other important things to keep in mind are eating a balanced diet, not skipping breakfast and consuming smaller meals throughout the day as well as getting adequate sleep and finding time each day to relax. These small things along with a few minutes of exercise will aid in keeping your waistline in check this holiday season.

###

Madonna ProActive is Lincoln's leader in medically based health and fitness. Located at 7111 Stephanie Lane near 55th St. and Pine Lake Road in Lincoln, ProActive is open to the public. For information about the programs and services available for people of all ages and ability levels, call (402) 420-0000 or visit www.MadonnaProActive.org.