

TOTAL HEALTH

# What's the best way to reach your fitness goals – running or walking? Putting your best foot forward

By KRISTIN EMERY  
For the Observer-Reporter  
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If you need motivation to accomplish your 2016 fitness goals, Dan White can be your inspiration.

White, 26, of McMurray, started walking in 2014 to lose weight. "I started walking, building up how many miles I could walk, and then slowly started jogging," says the IT technical support specialist. He wound up shedding 110 pounds.

"I did my first 5k in April. I never expected to be able to want to run like I do now." White said he started slowly and increased distance each day. "Let's just see how far I can get today and let's see how far I can get the next day and just keep building up," he said.

## On the cover

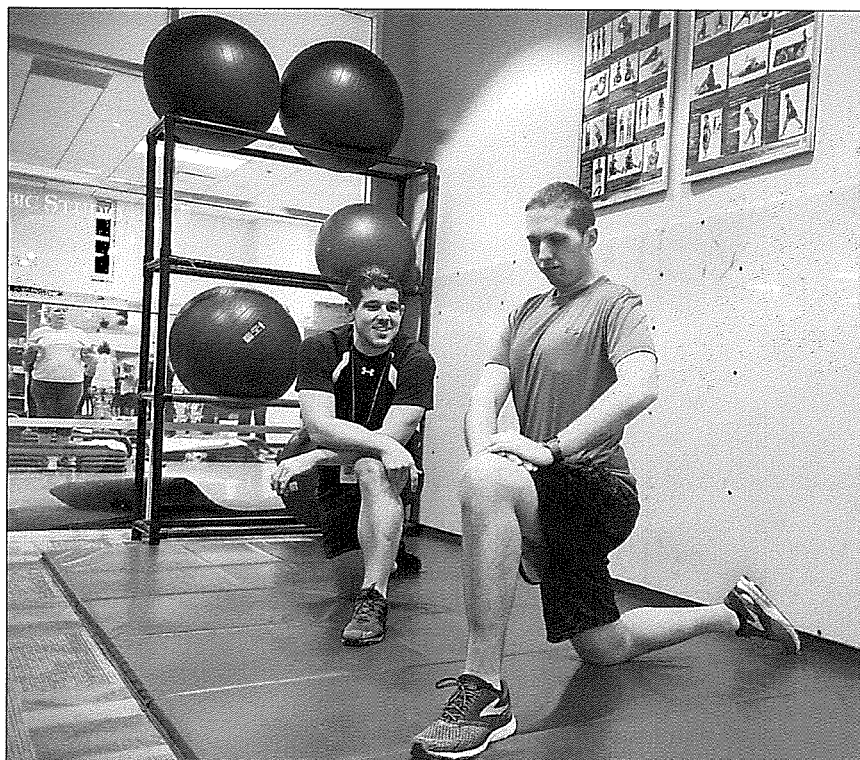
Dan White, left, jogs while his trainer, Joe Cavarretta, instructs him and Bob and Sandy Chappo walk around the track at the Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center. The photo was taken by Katie Roupe.

Slowly, he graduated to jogging. "At first it was, 'Oh, I have to run today.' But now it's, 'Oh, I can't wait to run!' It's something exciting I get to do after work." He added

sessions with personal trainer and exercise physiologist Joe Cavarretta at Washington Health System's Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center. Now, Cavarretta is helping him train for the Pittsburgh Half Marathon.

"Just take it slow and know what your boundaries are," said White. "Then try to exceed them every time. I feel a sense of accomplishment after I finish a long run, and it's such a stress reliever after a long day of work."

Please see Fitness, Page 6



Wilfred R. Cameron Wellness Center personal trainer Joe Cavarretta gives instruction to Dan White of McMurray on how to stretch for running training.

Katie Roupe/  
Observer-Reporter

**Ask the Vitamin Expert**

**Q** I have moderate cardiovascular disease and just recently had my 2nd heart implant in my heart. I am on prescription drugs for high blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes. Are there any supplements that can help keep my arteries from further plaque deposits?

**A** There are 3 supplements that have shown positive results with respect to plaque development. Pycnogenol, which is derived from the French maritime pine, has been shown in studies to slow the progression of plaque development. Contains antioxidants, which is a herb grown in India and other parts of Asia, has been shown to stabilize plaque deposits. This is the only ingredient because much of the danger posed by plaque occurs when it becomes unstable and ruptures. When this occurs, it can lead to a calcifying event that leads to a heart attack and stroke. Plaques are covered by a thin fibrous capsule, which prevents remodeling of thin-cap pool, soft plaque into thick-cap pool, harder and more stable structures that are less likely to rupture and cause heart attack or stroke. In another study, the use of pycnogenol showed no change in plaque size. The third supplement is a grapefruit extract. Pycnogenol was shown in a recent study to actually reduce plaque size.

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# Fitness

Continued from Page 4

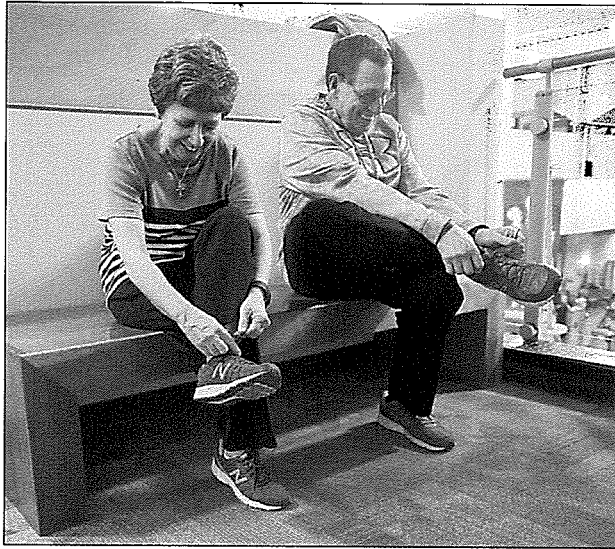
## Taking the first step

Walking can yield health benefits like decreased risk of heart disease, improved endurance, increased bone mass, lower blood pressure, weight loss and decreased stress. But should you graduate to running?

Experts say there is no right answer for everyone. "In terms of what's better, walking or running, I would say it just depends on what your goal is and what you're looking for," said Cavarretta. "In terms of weight loss, we know that the more calories burned the better because that's going to lead to decreases on the scale, and we know that running generally burns more calories per unit of time than walking. With that being said, there is a whole plethora of benefits of walking."

## Risk of injury?

What about risk of injury and long-term effects on bones and joints? There are varying opinions. Dr. Donald Ravasio, Allegheny Health Network orthopedic surgeon at Canonsburg Hospital, specializes in sports medicine and joint replacements. "This has been a long-debated topic in the orthopedic commu-



Sandy and Bob Chappo of Avella walk eight miles a day. The couple stay very active now that they are both retired.

KATE ROUPE/OBSERVER-REPORTER

nity," he said. "We can agree maintaining joint motion is imperative. In the younger patient population in which arthritic disease is not yet identifiable, walking or running are both excellent exercises, not just for cardiovascular health but for joint health as well."

For older patients, however, Ravasio changes his outlook. "As we age and arthritic changes occur in our joints, my recommendation is instead of running to select non-impact aerobic activities such as walking," Ravasio admitted some orthopedists may disagree with him.

Exercise physiologist and trainer Cavarretta cites other studies that show no downside to running. "New research shows that running does not damage your knees any more than not running," Cavarretta said. "People used to think runners have a higher risk of damaged knees later in life. They didn't necessarily find that running reduces your risk, but they just found it makes no difference."

Long-term effects of running or walking are one consideration, but day-to-day injuries are another. Cavarretta said. "The majority of running injuries that I see are a direct reflection of someone who didn't take a consistent, progressive approach to training. The number one cause of injuries is trying to do too much, too soon, too fast." Cavarretta recommends a slow and steady regimen.

Please see Fitness, Page 8

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TOTAL HEALTH

# Fitness

Continued from Page 6

"If people take this progressive approach and give themselves the recovery they need and take care of their bodies," he said, "you're seeing a lot of people who are running into their 70s and 80s and are perfectly healthy in their hips and bones."

Dr. Ravasio confirmed he does treat a lot of running injuries from spills on uneven terrain, missing steps and icy conditions. "The one circumstance that does cause a lot of injury that can be prevented is from patients overextending themselves," Ravasio warned. "Trying to do too much, too fast will almost universally result in muscle/tendon injury, particularly as we age."

## Walk to live or live to walk?

Bob Chappo, 65, of Avella, started walking on his newspaper route as a boy and logged miles during 39 years as a coal miner. He never considered walking for exercise until he was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a type of cancer that affects bone marrow.

"I walked all my life since I was 13 years old

and walked for a living," said Chappo. "Someone asked me, 'Do you live to work out or work out to live?' I said it's both really." Bob's wife, Sandy, 64, suggested the couple begin walking before Bob started treatment.

Sandy said, "He had to be built up before he went into the hospital. They recommended walking." That advice became a mandate from doctors to walk at least a mile a day after his bone marrow transplant. Now, Bob is recovered and the couple walks eight miles a day five to six days a week.

"I enjoy the walking so much, and I always figured I would get hurt running," said Bob. "I always see people running, but they're usually younger people. Once you get older, your joints and balance aren't quite as good, so it's a little easier walking than running."

Cavarretta confirms walking is terrific exercise. "Walking is absolutely a strong enough exercise or stimulus to give you all of those benefits of positive exercise, so even someone who is pretty fit can still benefit greatly from walking regularly," Ravasio agrees. "Any exercise is good," he said. "Gentle weight-bearing exercises (such as walking) are beneficial for the bones of people of all ages, including older people. Our bodies respond to the increase in tension by increasing bone density."

# Moderation

Continued from Page 2

saturated fat, which can increase risk for heart disease. Some studies have shown that moderate alcohol consumption can decrease the risk of heart disease, but other studies indicate that having a few drinks may do more harm than good.

Nutrition is a science, and in all facets of science there are conflicting research studies. It's how the scientific process works. People hear about these different studies and end up being more confused than ever, but overall diet advice hasn't really changed much, even if there's still some disagreement over the details.

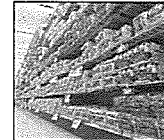
"There is a lot of conflicting advice regarding diet in the media," said Michele Pfarr, clinical nutrition manager at Monongahela Valley Hospital. "The overarching advice needs to be based in moderation and a diet based in nutrient-dense foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grain, low-fat dairy and lean proteins."

To lose weight, eat less. To get healthy, limit but don't necessarily eliminate foods high in saturated fat, sugar and salt. And, eating more vegetables is almost always a good idea, Pfarr said.

"All foods can fit in a healthy diet. It is simply a matter of choosing empty-calorie, unhealthy options less frequently than nutrient-dense foods," said Halloran.

During the winter months, it can be difficult to avoid packing on the pounds. But, local nutrition experts have a few tricks to help people avoid temptation. Fabyonic encourages people to drink plenty of water with their meals and to eat slowly. If you're heading to a party, Halloran suggests to eat a small meal first. That way you're not prone to make bad food choices because you're overly hungry.

Pfarr encourages people to continue exercising, even in the winter months, and to modify favorite recipes by using less butter, and lower-fat versions of ingredients "to make a special dish more healthy and still very enjoyable."



Bread is limited in some diets, and more people are turning to gluten-free options.

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