

HEALTH BREAK BREAKS

U of A
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
Cooperative Extension Service

Walk Across Arkansas!



Fall 2008, Week 7

WII FOR CHRISTMAS?

The Wii gaming console by Nintendo has taken the country by storm. This unique video gaming system uses a handheld wireless wand that makes the game work through arm and leg movements. Researchers have asked the question: Can this video game actually help kids and adults lose weight? The answer is yes and no.

Several studies have examined this question and have found that heart rate, energy expenditure and calories burned all increase compared to playing a more traditional hand and wrist video game. The increases, however, were rather minimal (see table to the right). Researchers concluded that possible benefits can be incurred through the Wii, but it does not compare to the health benefits obtained from playing outside – and the Wii does not offer exercise substantial enough to fulfill physical activity recommendations. Yet, some individuals *are* reporting weight loss or weight maintenance.

Bottom line: The Wii is a poor substitute for traditional activity, but it does burn more calories than traditional video games. This season the Wii FIT is coming to town, supposedly offering more opportunity to get your body moving. In the big scheme of things, every little bit helps.

GIFT IDEAS THAT INVOLVE OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES FOR OUR KIDS AND GRANDKIDS

- Pogo stick
- Jump rope
- Bike
- Roller blades, roller skates
- Scooter
- Soccer ball

**Please note that some equipment may need to be supplemented with appropriate safety gear.*

PERSPECTIVE: CALORIES BURNED

How does the Wii stack up against traditional video games and the real thing? Let's see below:

| Activity | Calories burned in about 30 minutes |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Traditional video game | ~107 |
| Wii tennis game | ~150 |
| Slow walk outside | ~240 |
| Brisk walk outside | ~300 |
| Actual tennis match | ~320 |

**Note: Being outside offers fresh air, better sleep, more calories burned and access to vitamin D.*