



by Laura Beaty, M.D.

Make a Commitment TO YOUR HEALTH—EXERCISE!

America's Health: State Health Rankings 2004 edition puts Georgia in 45th position for the overall health of individuals, families and communities in the nation (or just five spots away from being the most obese state in the nation)—our worst ranking in the 15 years that this report has been compiled. In the last 10 years, obesity rates have increased by more than 60 percent among adults. Our Surgeon General has labeled obesity a healthcare crisis and many other sources have gone so far as to label it an epidemic. The new U.S. dietary guidelines call for 60 minutes of daily exercise when trying to lose weight and 30 minutes of daily exercise to maintain health.

As a physician, I am constantly discussing weight loss strategies for patients. While there are pills and surgeries that will help, there is no substitute for eating less, eating healthier and exercising. Forgive me for repeating myself: there is no substitute for eating less, eating healthier and exercising!



 **Laura Beaty MD**

Dr. Laura Beaty is the weekly on-air host for Radio Sandy Springs' Health Hour Wednesdays and Thursdays at 9 a.m. on AM 1620 or www.radiosandysprings.com.

I understand the difficulty in motivating oneself to exercise. I tell my patients that do not enjoy exercising to treat it as a "necessary evil." The most common excuses are not finding the time and feeling too tired. After approximately three weeks of regular exercise, your energy will start to improve. Most patients report that they get more done during the day even though they are taking an hour out of their schedule to exercise.

My past is sprinkled with the on-and-off exercising habits of the typical American. It began with an aerobics class in college, which for me was a coordination challenge. As soon as I would get the legs right and start adding the arms, the moves would change. I decided aerobics probably wasn't my cup of tea. During medical school I joined a women's-only gym, but

dropped out after a few months. I was a single medical student stuck in classrooms and hospitals. Why did I think that exercising without men would work? Unfortunately, when I went to the typical gym with body builders and tons of people, I felt completely out of place. I was embarrassed to look at a piece of equipment that I did not know how to use or adjust for my height. I actually had two panic attacks and had to leave during this time period; instead of exercise-induced asthma, I diagnosed myself with exercise-induced anxiety. My piles of exercise equipment, videos, outfits, and various modes of music gadgetry would lie around untouched for months at a time.

Finally, I decided to start practicing what I preached. I moved exercise to a much higher position on my priority scale. I started subscribing to and clipping articles from various fitness magazines on how to use equipment and do certain exercises. I watched *FitTV* for guidance and forced myself to ask the gym staff for help when I encountered unfamiliar equipment. My biggest challenge now is staying in the routine during traveling and returning from vacation. One week off often turns into a four-week hiatus, but I always restart. I feel better when I work out consistently, and so will you.

My advice is to start exercising immediately. Do not wait for the extra time that will never come and even if you hate it, do it. Make exercising a priority and set a *minimum* of three times per week, even on your busiest weeks, with a goal of exercising daily. Join a gym, form a walking group and buy an easy-to-use piece of cardio equipment for the home. This allows multiple options and limits the excuses. Park a little further in the parking lots, make more trips when carrying in groceries and take the stairs. Find every opportunity during your day to take a few extra steps. It is easy to make suggestions, but it is up to you to make it happen. Make a commitment to your health. Lose weight the old-fashioned way, with hard work.

Dr. Laura Beaty's new concierge medical practice is located at 755 Mt. Vernon Highway, Suite 120, Atlanta. To learn more about becoming her patient, call 404-851-0029 or visit www.laurabeatymd.com. The new U.S. dietary guidelines can be found at www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/dga/ or www.mypyramid.gov.