

# BLUE ZONES®

## HOME CHECKLIST

**Did you know that watering houseplants burns the same number of calories as stretching and walking?** Scientists at the Mayo Clinic found that increasing simple movements – standing, walking, and talking – can help you burn an additional 350 calories each day.<sup>1</sup> By de-conveniencing your home, or changing the environment to make active living easier, you will burn these extra calories without even thinking about it. People living in Blue Zones® areas – places where people live longer, happier, healthier lives – don't use items of convenience like a TV remote or a riding lawn mower. Instead, the absence of these items seamlessly adds physical activity into their daily routines.



Is your home helping or hurting your efforts to stay fit? The Blue Zones® Home Checklist below will help you score the impact of your current home and yard on your level of physical activity. The answers will help you see where you can make small, simple changes to facilitate a naturally active lifestyle.

### DIRECTIONS

1. Print and fill out the questionnaire while walking through your home.
2. Add up your points to see your score.
3. Start making changes to your home and yard based on the recommendations given. These changes don't have to be made all at once—pick the easier ones to start with and continue completing at least one item each week.
4. Complete this tool again in three months to see how many points you've gained and how your rankings have improved!

Check off each item you are currently doing, and add up the points to see how supportive your home is of physical activity.

I DO THIS NOW      POINTS

### PLACE A SCALE IN A PROMINENT SPOT IN YOUR HOME AND WEIGH YOURSELF DAILY

**How to do it:** Place your scale on the floor in front of your bathroom mirror or in a place in your home where you can't avoid it.

3

**Why do it?** People who weigh themselves every day for two years weigh as much as 17 pounds less after two years than people who never weigh themselves.<sup>2</sup> Daily weight checks take only seconds, and the results can provide powerful reinforcement.

### HAVE ONLY ONE TV IN YOUR HOME

**How to do it:** Have only one TV. Put it in a common room, preferably in a cabinet behind doors. The goal here is to nudge you away from screen time that encourages overeating and detracts from potential physical activity.

5

**Why do it?** People who watch too much TV are more likely to be overweight. Watching TV actually lowers metabolism, makes us less active and engaged, and encourages us to eat junk food via commercials. Kids with a TV in their bedroom are 18% more likely to be (or become) obese and have lower grades.<sup>3</sup> The happiest people watch only 30-60 minutes of TV per day.

### REPLACE POWER TOOLS WITH HAND TOOLS

**How to do it:** Mow your lawn with a push lawn mower, shovel the snow with a hand shovel, and gather the leaves from your lawn with an old-fashioned rake instead of a leaf-blower.

5

**Why do it?** Shoveling, raking, and push-mowing are healthy and productive outdoor workouts – some burn almost 400 calories an hour.<sup>4</sup> In fact, mowing the lawn or raking leaves burns about the same amount of calories as lifting weights.<sup>5</sup>

### GROW AND MAINTAIN YOUR OWN GARDEN

**How to do it:** Plant a garden in your yard or take a look through the “how-to projects” featured on the National Gardening Association website ([www.garden.org](http://www.garden.org)), and choose a project that's right for you and your space. Start planting and enjoying your delicious produce!

3

**Why do it?** Gardening is common in Blue Zones areas. This activity provides low-intensity range-of-motion exercise, stress reduction, and fresh vegetables. In fact, the CDC points out that you can burn 150 calories by gardening (standing) for approximately 30-45 minutes.<sup>6</sup>

	I DO THIS NOW	POINTS
<b>OWN A DOG</b>		
<p><b>How to do it:</b> Go to your local animal shelter or pet store and buy or adopt a dog.</p> <p><b>Why do it?</b> Pets make for great companions and encourage you to walk or run. Researchers found that if you own a dog, you get over five hours of exercise a week without a lot of added effort.<sup>7</sup> In fact, studies have shown that dog owners have lower rates of health problems compared to those who don't own a dog.<sup>8</sup></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>3</b>
<b>OWN A BIKE</b>		
<p><b>How to do it:</b> Buy a bike or fix your current bike so you can use it. Also, use a helmet to prevent injury.</p> <p><b>Why do it?</b> Just having a bike nudges you to use it. Riding at a moderate speed burns approximately 235 calories per half hour.<sup>9</sup> Wearing a bicycle helmet reduces the risk of serious head injury in crashes by as much as 85%, and the risk for brain injury by as much as 88%.<sup>10</sup></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>5</b>
<b>OWN AT LEAST FOUR OF THE FOLLOWING: BASKETBALL, BASEBALL, FOOTBALL, GOLF BALLS/CLUBS, ROLLER BLADES, CAMPING SUPPLIES, RUNNING SHOES</b>		
<p><b>How to do it:</b> Keep sporting equipment in your yard to encourage physical activity.</p> <p><b>Why do it?</b> Makes this equipment easy to use. Did you know that rollerblading burns more calories than running track and field hurdles, and playing catch for only 30 minutes burns over 100 calories?<sup>11</sup></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>3</b>
<b>HAVE INDOOR PLANTS THROUGHOUT YOUR HOME</b>		
<p><b>How to do it:</b> Pick up some pots, potting soil, and some of your favorite greenery to place throughout your home. For plants that are easy to maintain, try a Golden Pothos Vine or a Spider Plant.</p> <p><b>Why do it?</b> Did you know that watering plants burns the same amount of calories as stretching and walking?<sup>12</sup> Besides their ability to clean the air, indoor plants have been proven to provide health benefits to people who interact with them. And because plants are permanent, you'll be nudged to nurture them daily.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>3</b>

	I DO THIS NOW	POINTS
<b>CREATE A DESTINATION ROOM</b>		
<p><b>How to do it:</b> Create a room on the top level of your home in which you are fully immersed in what you're doing – where it's easy to engage in a hobby, read a book, or do a family activity. Include a large table for family projects, shelves filled with books, and plenty of light. Leave out the clock, TV, computer, or other distracting gadgets.</p> <p><b>Why do it?</b> A popular room on another level of your home increases stair climbing. Did you know that you burn 10 calories per minute climbing up stairs and four calories per minute climbing down them?<sup>13</sup></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
<b>DISCONNECT YOUR GARAGE DOOR OPENER</b>		
<p><b>How to do it:</b> Stop using your electric garage door opener. Instead, open the door manually.</p> <p><b>Why do it?</b> Getting out of the car, raising the door, and returning to the car rather than using a remote control will burn seven calories per minute.<sup>13</sup> Doing this twice a day takes about 10 minutes and burns around 70 additional calories!</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
<b>CREATE AN INDOOR EXERCISE AREA</b>		
<p><b>How to do it:</b> Designate a portion of a room in your home for your exercise equipment, stability ball, yoga mat, and/or weight set.</p> <p><b>Why do it?</b> Exercising is made more convenient when you have a space in your home designated for that specific activity. You are more likely to use the equipment if it's easily accessible and visible. A study at the University of Florida found that women who exercised at home lost 25 pounds in 15 months and maintained that loss.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
<b>GET RID OF YOUR TV REMOTE</b>		
<p><b>How to do it:</b> Instead of using your TV remote to change the channel, walk over to your TV and manually switch stations.</p> <p><b>Why do it?</b> Getting up and changing the channel manually 10 times per day will burn 100 more calories each day.<sup>13</sup></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5

I DO THIS  
NOW POINTS

### PLACE CUSHIONS ON THE FLOOR

**How to do it:** Instead of sitting on chairs and furniture all the time, sit on cushions on the floor.

5

**Why do it?** Sitting on the floor works your thighs, glutes, and lower back each time you sit down and stand back up. Supporting yourself without a chair back improves posture and may help you burn up to an additional 130 calories each hour.<sup>11</sup>

TOTAL POINTS (55 possible):

#### TOTALS

**50+ points: Blue Zones Home.** You have de-convenienced your living environment in a way that allows you to mindlessly move your way to better health.

**30 to 49: Almost There.** You are well on your way to creating an ideal home environment.

**15 to 29: On Your Way.** When you begin to pair many of these behaviors together, you'll start engaging in physical activity more often. Which item is first on your list of changes? Get started on that right now.

**Below 15: Just Getting Started.** Everyone has to start somewhere. Begin the process by prioritizing the changes you want to make and start on them tomorrow.

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>Levine, James A, Mark W Vander Weg Robert C Klesges (2006), "Increasing Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis: A NEAT Way to Increase Energy Expenditure in your Patients," *Obesity Management*, 2:4 (August), 146-151.

<sup>2</sup>Klem ML, Wing RR, McGuire MT, Seagle HM, Hill JO. "A descriptive study of individuals successful at long-term maintenance of substantial weight loss." *Am J Clin Nutr* 1997, 66:239-246.

<sup>3</sup>Roberts DF, Foehr UG, Rideout V. (2005) "Generation M: media in the lives of 8-18 year-olds". *Kaiser Family Foundation*, 32, 1140-115.

<sup>4</sup><http://caloriecount.about.com/calories-burned-mowing-lawn-a159>

<sup>5</sup>Ainsworth BE, et al. (2000). Compendium of physical activities: an update of activity codes and MET intensities." *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*. 32(9 Suppl):S498-504].

<sup>6</sup><http://www.cdc.gov/family/gardening/> (Accessed 7/15/11)

<sup>7</sup>The Telegraph (November, 27, 2009). "Average dog owner 'gets more exercise than gym-goers'." <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/dietandfitness/6666409/Average-dog-owner-gets-more-exercise-than-gym-goers.html> (Accessed 7/28/11)

<sup>8</sup>Serpell, J (1991), "Beneficial effects of pet ownership on some aspects of human health and behaviour," *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, Vol. 84, 717-720.

<sup>9</sup><http://bicycling.about.com/od/cyclingforabetterbody/a/weightloss.htm>

<sup>10</sup>Thompson RS, Rivara FP, Thompson DC. A case-control study of the effectiveness of bicycle safety helmets. *N Engl J Med*. 1989; 320:1361-7.

<sup>11</sup>[http://www.caloriesperhour.com/index\\_burn.php](http://www.caloriesperhour.com/index_burn.php) (Accessed 7/15/11)

<sup>12</sup>Ainsworth, B. E., et al. "Compendium of physical activities: an update of activity codes and MET intensities." *Medicine and science in sports and exercise* 32.9 Suppl (2000):S498-S504.

<sup>13</sup><http://www.guardian.co.uk/befit/story/0,,1387859,00.html> (Accessed 7/15/11)