



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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Get on the ball to help burn calories, tone muscles

*By Karen Hawkins,
DeCA dietitian*

FORT LEE, Va. – May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month; a great time to start exercising or adding a little variety to your usual physical activity routine.

Have a desk job or spend a lot of time in front of a computer and want to try something different to maybe burn more calories? You might want to try sitting on an exercise ball while working at the computer.

A 2008 study in the European Journal of Applied Physiology compared energy use of people doing clerical work while sitting in an office chair, sitting on an exercise ball or standing up. The study found that study participants burned 4.1 calories more per hour – a 6 percent boost – when they were either standing or sitting on the exercise ball as compared to sitting in the regular office chair.

There was no difference between standing up and sitting on the exercise ball. Being sold on the idea, I have given up my desk chair and sit on my bright yellow ball all day when in the office. However, if you have a history of back problems, it is a good idea to check with your doctor before sitting on an exercise ball for any time.

Getting on the ball

As exercise balls come in different sizes, choose one that is right for your height. When sitting on the ball, your hips should be level or slightly higher than the knees. This will help you maintain comfortable control while using the ball. The first time sitting on an exercise ball you

may feel a little wobbly; that is normal as the surface is unstable. Your body is constantly changing its center of gravity in order to remain balanced and still. Give it time; it gets easier. Start off slowly with sitting for 15 to 30 minutes a day and try increasing the time by 30-minute increments every few weeks.

Train your muscles

All your core muscles, including back, abdominals, gluteals and leg muscles are working to keep you stable. Over time, sitting on the ball can help tone your muscles. Some consider it a mini workout as your muscles are doing the work. Sitting on the ball can help improve posture as your body assumes an upright position. If you find yourself slouching it may be time to move or sit in your chair for awhile.

Physical activity tips to help you move

If sitting on the ball is not an option for now, or you want to try something else, check out the commissary case lot sale listing at <http://www.commissaries.com> to see if your installation is participating in a Family Fun Fitness Festival event. If so, you are guaranteed to have some fun and save 30 percent and more on your purchases at the case lot sale.

For a little more activity that adds up over time, park the car at the back of the parking lot at work, at school and at the commissary.

For more information about making healthy choices, visit Ask the Dietitian on <http://www.commissaries.com> and post your questions on the DeCA Dietitian Forum. Be sure to look for other useful information in the Dietitian's Voice archive. Sign up with the DeCA Dietitian on www.twitter.com and get messages sent to your cell phone today. For delicious recipes, check out Kay's Kitchen. And to enjoy all your commissary has to offer, sign up for the *Commissary Connection*.

-DeCA-

Photo caption: Karen Hawkins, the DeCA dietitian, sits on her exercise ball at Defense Commissary Agency headquarters. Because exercise balls come in different sizes, she said it is important to choose one that is right for your height. When sitting on the ball, your hips should be level or slightly higher than the knees. (DeCA photo)

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent*

surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,300 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.