

**Dr. W. G. Brandstadt, M.D.**

*Great Vogue*

*Of Isometrics*

*Stand 6-30-65*



There can be no doubt that regular exercise is an aid to physical fitness. At the moment a type of exercise called isometric is having a great vogue. When you pick up an apple you use only a few of the fibers of the muscles involved. If you pick up a 10-pound weight you use more fibers of the same muscles. Only when you try to lift a 600-pound weight and fail have you used all the fibers of those muscles.

That maximum effort, sustained for a few seconds, is the basis of all isometric exercises.

Since these exercises will do nothing to improve the range of motion of your joints, they are of limited value, especially for persons over 40 who are beginning to feel the twinges of arthritis. For this reason isometric exercises, valuable as they are,

should not be used to the exclusion of other forms of exercise even by persons who are bedfast.

One isometric exercise consists of sitting in a chair and pressing the heel of one elevated foot against the resisting top of the other. Or you may stand on a low stool and press upward with all your might against the top of the door frame.

While sitting in a chair try to lift the seat a few inches nearer the ceiling. Or clasp your arms behind your head and push your head forward against the maximum resistance of your neck muscles. This is a sample of what you can attempt without ever leaving the room.

It is estimated that such an effort for each group of muscles, sustained for six to 10 seconds is as beneficial as a more

prolonged effort. But some authorities state that these exercises should be done several times a day and not just once as advocated by others.

The main advantage of isometric exercises is that they can be done anywhere without special clothes or equipment. This is a boon to the office worker who has little or no opportunity to engage in outdoor sports during the week. Furthermore they are safe.

It is a great mistake, however, to expect any results from doing these exercises in a half-hearted or haphazard manner. They should not be attempted by a person with heart disease or an organic nervous disease without the approval of his doctor.

Although some athletes use these exercises, their need for them is doubtful. For most of the rest of us isometric exercises should be used in addition to and not as a substitute for regular outdoor exercise.