



Regular exercise keeps Santa fit despite his size

Once a year, Santa Claus engages in an endurance event that makes triathlons, marathons and all other endurance events look like child's play in comparison. Carrying and delivering toys to all deserving children around the world in a single night is certainly the most amazing strength and endurance feat known throughout history.

Last week we interviewed Santa about how he stays so fit. Below are some of his not-so-secret secrets:

Question: How does Santa get and stay in shape for this endurance event?

Answer: As you might imagine, being in shape for the Christmas Eve outing requires training. Running the North Pole toy factory and warehouse year-round requires both strength and endurance. Although the elves are strong for their size, Santa typically does the really heavy lifting around the shop. As the holiday season approaches, there is an increasing amount of lifting to do. With this work, Santa has a built-in strength training program that helps him maintain the substantial muscle mass and strength he needs on Christmas Eve.

For endurance training, Santa checks his pedometer to make sure

he walks a minimum of 10,000 steps or five miles a day. In the process of managing the huge toy facility, however, he often walks twice that far. Daily walking throughout the toy factory and the warehouse gives Santa the aerobic exercise training needed for good endurance capacity and helps to maintain his blood sugar at normal levels.

Q: Does Santa have any issues with his body size?

A: Santa realizes that he is genetically a rather big man. Even though he has been accused of being obese based on standard "body mass index" (BMI) weight for height measurements, he knows that fitness is not just measured by this BMI number or washboard abs. Santa is both big and fit like a professional football player.

Recent scientific estimates of Santa's body fat indicate it has slowly declined over the past 10 years to a rather healthy 20 percent of body weight. Some speculate this drop in body fat is due to the extra work required to handle the increased world population and the growing number of children on the nice list.

Q: What does Santa do during off-season to maintain his strength and fitness?

A: After Christmas Eve, Santa

takes about a week off to spend time with his family, watch New Year's Day football and let his overworked muscles recover. The rest of the year is a process of steadily building back up to the big annual event. During his muscle recovery time and the slower beginning of toy production, Santa consumes a wide variety of his usual favorite foods, but in lesser quantities.

Q: What does Santa's normal diet look like?

A: First of all, Santa wants to clarify that the Christmas elf four-food-group system of candy, candy canes, candy corns and syrup is nothing more than a fun movie myth. Santa and the elves are well aware that health and fitness require consuming all of the essential nutrients in adequate quantities within a reasonable calorie intake.

Santa does this by consuming a wide variety of foods from all of the food groups (protein, dairy, fruits, vegetables and grains). He also allows about 100 calories a day for quality-control tasting of candy canes or having a glass of wine with dinner. Santa also thinks it is a healthy practice to have meals with the family. Sharing food helps to bring friends and family together and make meals more enjoyable.

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