

SOAPS TURN TO HEALTHY PLOT LINES.

Characters in popular television shows will take up healthy pursuits such as walking and gardening as part of a Government drive to encourage people to do more exercise. Storylines in soap operas will promote the benefits of physical activity during a sustained Ministerial campaign next year to tackle the soaring number of people who are overweight or obese.

The BBC and ITV are in talks with officials about how they can help the Government achieve its goal of reversing the alarming national trend towards unhealthy sedentary lifestyles. Ministers hope that positive "messages" in programmes will persuade viewers that doing everything from DIY and housework to cycling and sports can boost their health. Official figures show that between 50% and 75% of the population do not take enough exercise.

The Government is also drawing up plans for a major advertising campaign involving print media, radio and television stations and billboards to emphasize the links between activity and good health. It will stress that making simple changes to everyday routines such as getting off a bus one stop early and walking the rest of the way can greatly reduce vulnerability to serious illnesses associated with inactivity.

The Observer, December 28 2003.

- soap opera = popular TV serial
- to take up = to adopt
- DIY = Do It Yourself
- to emphasize = to insist on ...