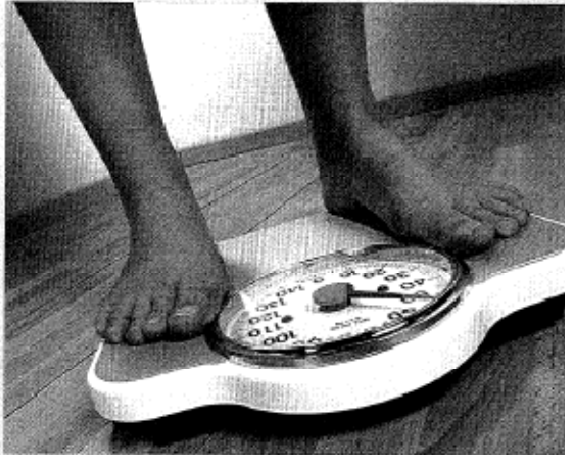


Fitness Game for Weight Loss



for the world's obesity epidemic," according to James Levine, a Mayo Clinic physician and leading authority on obesity. Levine coined the "NEAT" term to cover all physical activity that is not conscious exercise. And these games encourage small daily lifestyle changes such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator. "We hope the games can increase physical activity, and add a dose of NEAT in the modern lifestyle," says Pavlidis. "We expect an almost 'addictive' behavior resulting from this game, much like the habit of playing solitaire during breaks is a ritual for many people."

Finding a way to motivate the millions of people, who are overweight, to lose the excess pounds can be a weighty task. But Professor of Computer Science Ioannis Pavlidis and his research team might have a NEAT-o idea. NEAT-o games, dubbed Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis, are computer games that translate physical activity into video games such as races and logic puzzles. These games can be played on any hand-held PDA (personal digital assistant) with users wearing a lightweight sensor that detects movement like running, walking, bending, or even foot tapping. The movement data is then transmitted to the PDA via a wireless connection, and the player can observe the game avatar moving in real-time to their movements. "When you see the avatar move when you move, you really become connected to the game," says Pavlidis. "The lack of daily exercise is largely responsible