

HIT AND MYTH

In the second of the series, NAWAZ MODI dispels some all-too-common misconceptions about aerobics and exercise

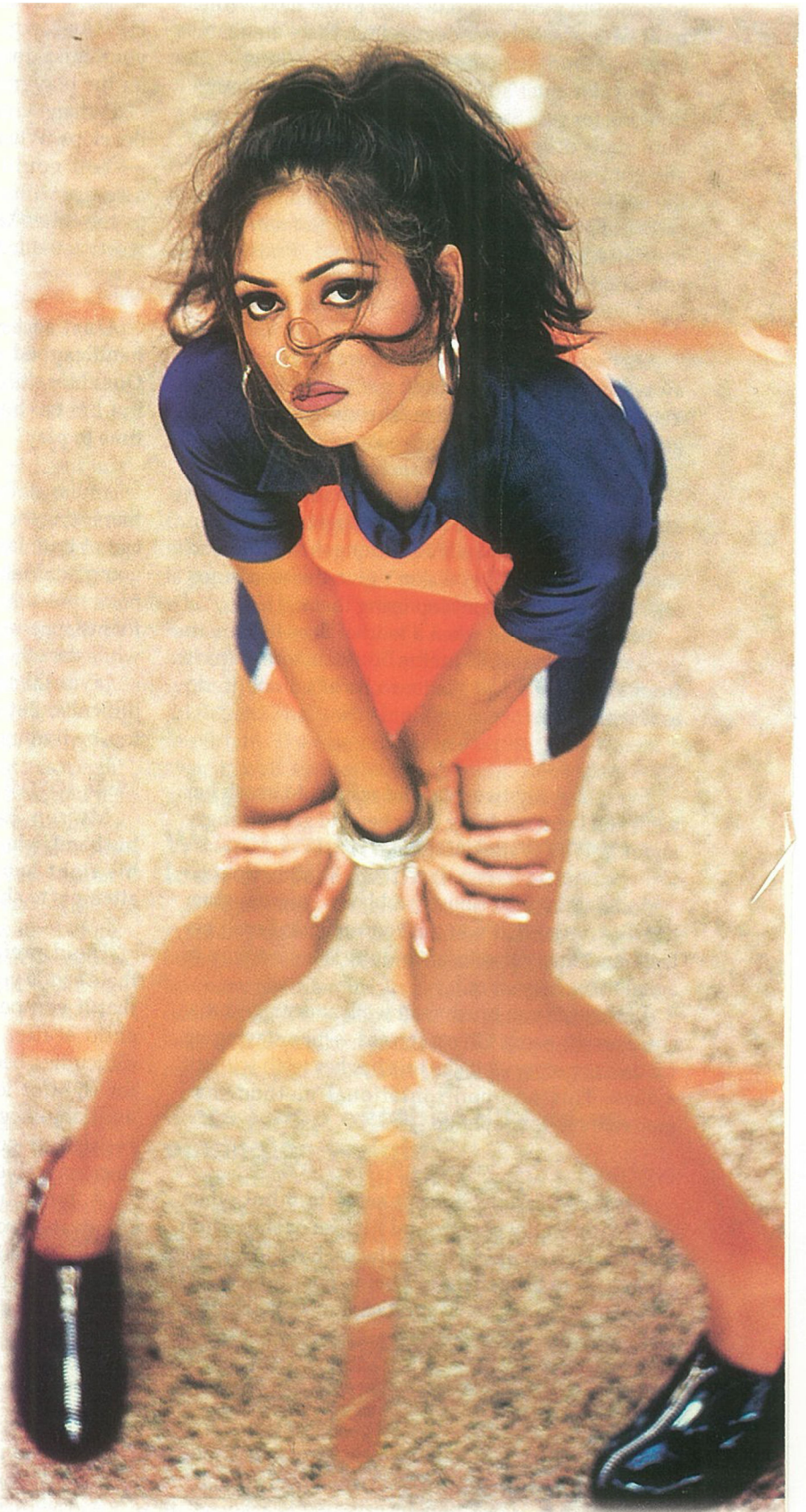
In a day and age where people are increasingly conscious about their physical appearance, the number of myths and misconceptions that still exist as far as exercise is concerned, is ironical. You may have heard of the myths we're going to talk about, or even fallen prey to some of them yourself. But just watch as we demolish them!

One should never drink water during a workout

Not true! One should drink water before, during and after a workout as:

- a. The water lost through sweat must be replaced to avoid dehydration, and
- b. Body temperature must be regulated to avoid over-heating, as this hampers your ability to

MODEL: BOBBY-JETHMAL, FEMINA LOOK OF THE YEAR '97 CONTESTANT PHOTOGRAPH: SHIV SARAN



continue exercising. However, water must be sipped at regular intervals during a workout, and not gulped down, as that will, in all probability, give the participant a stitch.

The more I sweat, the more fat I burn

Again, not true! Water loss is NOT fat loss, and sweat is only water loss! Burning fat and sweating often go hand in hand, and are therefore confused as being one and the same thing. However, excessive water loss through sweat can be very harmful as it can lead to dehydration and heat strokes. It also hampers the ability to continue any form of cardiovascular exercise due to overheating of the body, which is not able to effectively get rid of this heat build-up.

Let me explain with an analogy. The radiator in a car be compared to our water stores, while the fuel tank can be related to our fat stores. When the radiator is low on water, the car over-heats and performance is impaired. When the radiator is completely out of water, the car will stall on you. This has nothing whatsoever to do with the fuel tank (burning fat, in our case). So, to confuse our fuel tank (fat stores) with our radiator (water stores) would be absurd.

Steam and sauna facilities bank on this myth. After sweating it out in a sauna or steam room, the inches and weight have definitely dropped — but this weight and inch loss is only water loss, not fat loss, and it's only temporary! When you consume water again, it's going to go right back where it came from and you will be back to square one! While steams and saunas have other benefits, fat loss is certainly not one of them. To facilitate fat loss, you must drink water before, during and after exercise, and remain well hydrated, or else you'll just end up exhausted and unable to continue with your exercise programme.

The harder I work, the more fat I'll burn

Sorry, but if you've been working yourself to the bone, you aren't burning fat. For fat loss, one must work at low to moderate intensities for approximately 25-35 minutes, and not at a very high intensity. In other words, one must remain in one's fat burning range, or in one's target heart range or training zone (see 'Femina', May 1).

This is done by locating and checking the pulse. Two common pulse sites are the wrist and the neck. Each individual's target heart range or fat burning zone must be worked out separately, taking into consideration factors like age, stamina level, health limitations and goals. Without this range and the knowledge of how to calculate and implement it, one may be burning other sources of energy like glycogen,

quick energy, etc. rather than stored body fats. So, if fat loss is your goal, you would be wasting a lot of time, effort and (possibly) money by overworking, and only end up being very disappointed.

At the end of my exercise programme, I'll have lost a lot of weight!

Not necessarily! The best thing to do is to combine cardiovascular fitness with muscle-toning. In other words, to burn fat and to tone up. When we're working in a cardiovascular way, we're burning fat and inches and are going down on the weighing scales. Great! However, when toning, muscle becomes heavier and denser (but more compact) than flab is. So, during this segment, while the inches and fat remain low, weight goes up.

Well, then why not just skip the muscle tone and work on the fat loss bit? That way, one can keep the fat, inches and weight down, right? Right. However, without some degree of muscle tone, visual appeal is greatly reduced. We've all come across women who've lost loads of weight and inches, but still seem rather shapeless. They still have flab (but not extra inches) hanging around where they least want it — typically, around the lower belly, the inner and outer thighs, etc. That's why building up on muscle tone is important. It's also crucial in keeping the skeletal system well supported and strong. In conclusion, getting rid of this segment is just not advisable.

Weight training makes women look muscle bound and manly

Within limits, weight training adds to feminine grace and appeal. It is very hard for women to become bulky and muscle-bound, due to the lack of the male hormone testosterone. To develop the sort of bodies one sees in 'Muscle and Fitness' magazine, women would have to take steroids. So, while you're on the right track, don't start off with all the wrong ideas!

Once I stop aerobics I'll end up putting on weight

Not true! What will happen is that your body composition will change. In other words, when one is working out, the fat vs. muscle ratio improves. Stored body fat decreases, while muscle tone increases. When one discontinues any form of exercise, fat loss is frozen, weight and inches will remain the same, but muscle tone decreases. That's the way it is with muscle — you either use it or lose it! In fact, the weight shown on your scales will drop as muscle tone decreases (provided your dietary habits remain reasonable). If not, get ready to watch all that hard work go down the drain! So eat sensibly — the gates of paradise are narrow!