



nawaz modi singhania
perfect fit

Strong requirements

The first in a series on what is essential to know when exercising

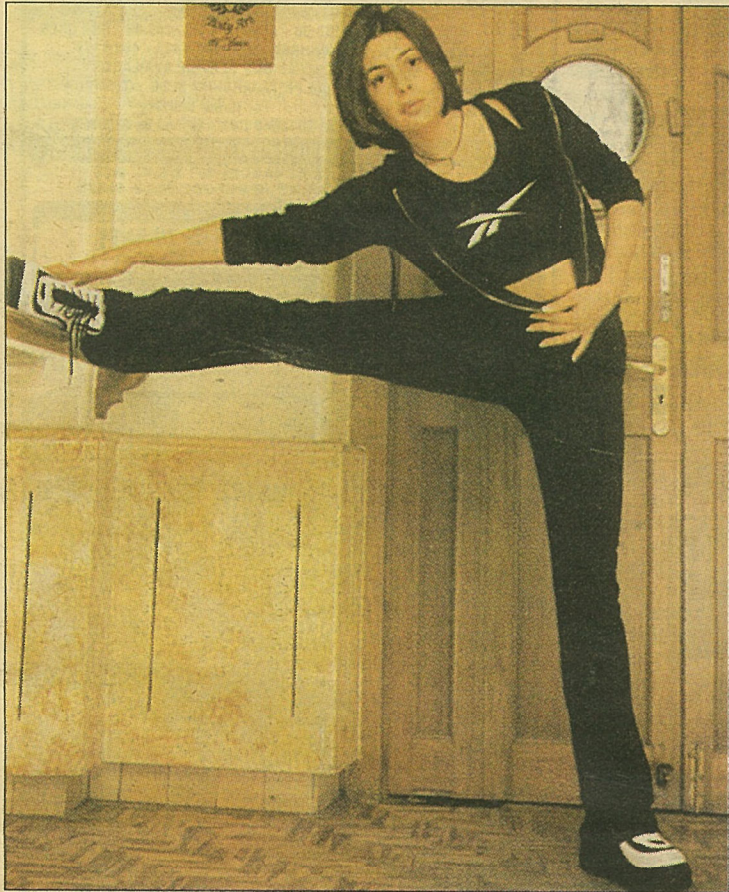


Figure 1: Regular stretching enhances your flexibility

Reading is to the mind, what exercise is to the body.

Sir Richard Steele

Exercise is for everyone

As long as you have a physical existence, you need physical exercise. By the time most people discover that good health is everything, they've already lost it. Whether you're young or old, male or female, your health and fitness level will benefit from some form of physical exercise. Keeping active and fit is one of the best preventive medications available. Do it like your life depends on it, because to a large extent, it does.

Starting up

Choose a form of exercise that you enjoy, and that your fitness level permits. Make sure it's convenient and fits in comfortably with your schedule. Otherwise, you're unlikely to stick with it. Use everyday opportunities such as using the stairs instead of the lift, or walking on short trips rather than taking the car. If you lack motivation, exercising with a friend or joining a class will help.

Get it straight

As many exercise and sports injuries result from faulty technique, inadequate professional supervision and incorrect body alignment, it is best to seek professional advice and coaching. These do-it-yourself kits are often ineffective at best and downright harmful at worst. At a later stage, you might continue by yourself, but only once you've gotten the basics totally straight.

Stretch out

Always prepare yourself for strenuous physical activity with a round of stretches. Regular stretching improves your flexibility and is crucial in injury prevention. Your stretches should be taken to the point where you feel gentle tension, pain or discomfort. Make sure they never bounce or jerk. Ballistic stretching is very forceful and can

easily lead to injury. Flexibility of not only muscles, but joint, ligaments and tendons can also be improved. Figure 1 demonstrates lower limb flexibility training. Repeat your stretching routine when you're done exercising to minimise and preferably eradicate the resulting aches and pains. Include all the large muscles of the body, and any others which you might be particularly targeting during your workout routine.

Get real

Set realistic goals. Otherwise you'll end up being disheartened, and possibly even injured. Many people set their target weight too low. Choose the weight and inches that are right for you, and not ones which you must struggle to maintain. It's also important to set realistic short-term goals. Start with your exercise programme slowly, and gradually increase the length of time and the amount of effort you put in as your fitness levels improve.

Exercise gear and equipment

Always wear the correct protective gear for the type of exercise or sport you are going to be engaging in. Make sure your equipment is the right size, and this applies to even things like rackets and pads, not just gloves and shorts. Get sensible training shoes which are both comfortable and shock absorbent. Ensure that they have features which are relevant to the activity you are about to embark upon.

Don't jump in at the deep end

Start slowly and gradually. Allow yourself to have enough time to adjust to the activity before overloading by increasing the length of your workout, the number of times per week you workout, or the intensity at which you exercise. This way you make sure that you haven't bitten off more than you can chew, and you don't end up just dropping the whole programme because the

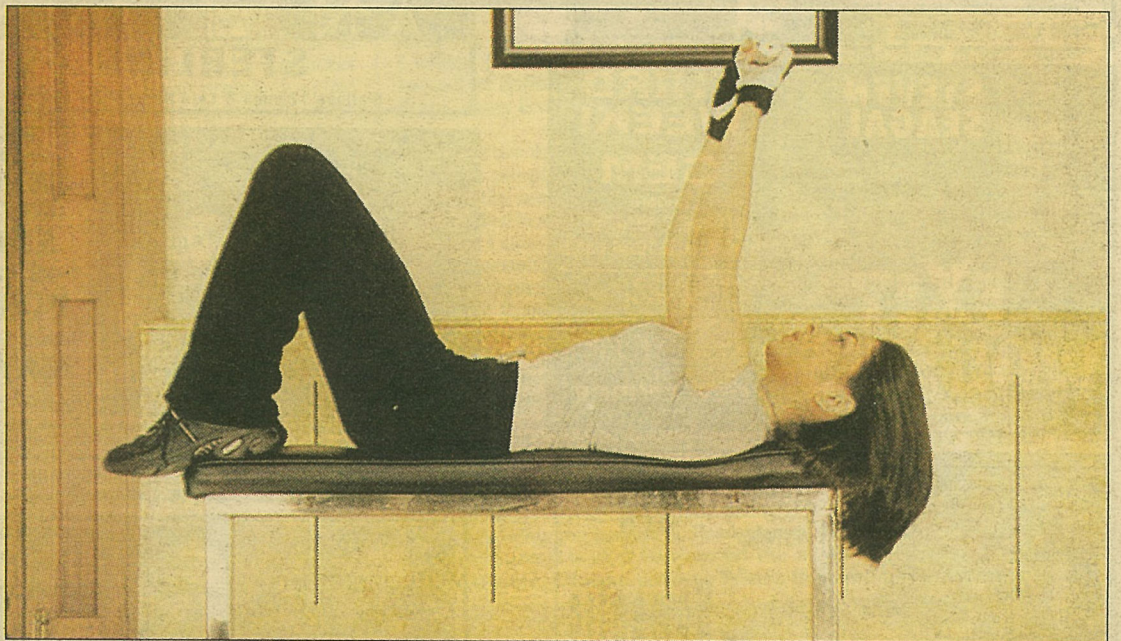


Figure 2: Bench-pressing for upper body development

demands you placed on yourself were unreasonable. That's also the best way of making sure you get the results that you want, and minimise the risk of injury.

Aerobics

Walking, jogging, swimming, an aerobic class including all sorts of routines such as step, box-aerobics, hi-lo fusions, new body format, etc, cycling, stair climbing, hiking, rope jumping, and so on, are all aerobic activities. They will improve cardiovascular fitness and increase endurance, while keeping the fat at bay. Cardio workouts are an essential part of a fitness routine.

Exercise for strength

Any exercise which will improve the condition of your muscles is important and must be included in any exercise programme. It's a good idea to join a fitness centre which includes muscle toning and strength training in its workout programming. An increase in muscle tone may be realised by working against gravity, by using one's own body weight as resistance, by working against one's own strength, by working with weights or bands, or even with a partner. Figure 2 demonstrates the use of weights for upper body tone and development. Don't make the costly mistake of rushing out and buying costly exercise equipment that you're likely to discard in a few weeks.

Watch that weight

Firstly, know your own ideal weight. Height-weight charts which are freely available will give you that information. Consult it in conjunction with your height, body frame and sex. Secondly, keep a record of your weight and inches on a periodical basis, so you know where you started and in which direction you're headed. Seeing regular improvements in fat/inch loss and an increase in muscle tone will keep you motivated to keep going, stick to the programme, and to scale new heights.

Teach your young

Obesity often runs in the family. One's unhealthy eating, lifestyle and exercise habits can be inherited by one's children. Although children are generally active and energetic, it's not long before they slip into inculcating their parent's undesirable habits. Practice what you preach, because it's your actions and not your words that will impress upon your children.

For the aging

Quoting Gabrielle Chanel, "Nature gives you the body you have at twenty; it's upto you to merit the body you have at fifty." Impress upon your elders that the older we get, the more prone we are to health-related problems and disorders. It is then that exercise can help us most to keep us in as-near mint condition as possible. Exercise is the best preventive medicine available. Why not cultivate health instead of treating disease? Undoubtedly exercise has to be modified for the elderly, which a qualified trainer will take care of.

Exercise anywhere

While undoubtedly the best thing to do is to take out the time to get in your chosen form of exercise in an organised, orderly fashion, on anything is better than nothing basis, do whatever you can. You can exercise just about anytime and anywhere at home, at work while still at your desk, even in the elevator or in the kitchen! Do whatever you can. It's a deal better than doing nothing at all!

The role of food

When you get that sinking feeling on a scale, it's time to start reducing! As McKenzie put it so well, it isn't a woman's will which makes her diet - it's her ego.

The best way to control your weight is to eat small, frequent meals, rather than binge on large meals with unhealthy snacking in between. Eat nutritious foods that do not add up to an excessive number of calories.

Popular diets are often unpalatable, monotonous, ineffective, counterproductive towards the cause, and downright harmful. It is best to opt for a sensibly balanced, low-calorie diet, which is sparing on fats and sugars, and rich in fibre and carbs.

While they cleverly say that another good reducing exercise consists of placing both hands against the table edge and pushing back, do not make the mistake of ending up by missing meals altogether. Your body will receive warning signals telling it to conserve energy (by burning fewer calories for the same amount of work) in response to the temporary absence of food. This way we unintentionally lower our metabolic rate, preparing the stage for greater fat gain when we come off the diet, making permanent fat loss that much harder.

The role of water

Make sure you consume adequate

water on a daily basis. Water refers to not just plain water, but to the water that you get from fruits, vegetables and juices. Among its many vitally important roles, water is crucial in weight control and management, and keeps the skin healthy and elastic. Even when it comes to exercise, it's important to drink water before, during and after your workout. This will aid in temperature regulation and in allowing your body to continue exercising. A loss of water (through sweat) and a lack of replenishing it could cause heat-related disorders such as heat cramps, and even heat strokes in severe cases.

Your support system

Make sure you are surrounded by supportive family members, friends and colleagues who encourage you on your weight loss trail, praise you for the distance you've covered and value and respect you all through it. Keep away from those who try and use your body size and weight against you, while constantly trying to be demeaning, pull you down, and belittle you. You owe that to yourself!

Our planet is invaded by such insensitive creatures. This really doesn't require elaboration as I'm certain we've all seen or experienced this one some way or the other. Encourage positivity in your life, while eradicating the negativity. Whatever they say, such people obviously do not have your best interest at heart.

Health check

If you have health problems/limitations, are elderly, or are obese, it is wise to visit your doctor for a routine check-up before taking on an exercise programme. Do not shy away from this thinking that if you consult a doctor on it, he will advise you against exercise. They will ask you to exercise caution, and they will need for your routine to be tailored around your individual requirements. However, without this, your trainer cannot safely and effectively work your routine out taking into account your special requirements and goals. Do it in your own best interest.

(For a large variety of workouts or gym sessions, contact the columnist's fitness centre, Body Art, at 380-2602 and 380-5929)

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