

THE ROLE OF EXERCISE IN HEALTH

Exercise is an important part of our lives in keeping us physically and mentally fit. Scientists have supported that the body produces its own tranquilizing and painkilling group of hormones called endorphins. Another theory is that exercise simply distracts the mind from problems, and becomes refreshed to face them again. Most people are aware that exercise may reduce the risk of heart attacks and contribute to the lowering of blood pressure.

Never assume that you are too old or too infirm to do exercises, a moderate exercise programme that is tailored to meet your particular needs can actually help to slow down the aging process. With inactivity and a sedentary life, muscles become weak and flabby, the joints feel stiff and the sense of balance decreases. Physical exercise can alleviate these problems and reduce the risk of falls especially among the aged. In times of many challenges, when one feels desperate, anxious and lacking enthusiasm, sustained manageable exercise at least give stamina, a feeling of accomplishment and a sense of mastery. Doing exercises is like making an investment for one's health.

BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

When exercise is combined with a sensible diet, it produces many positive results. The following are some of the benefits that many people experience as a result of doing exercises regularly.

- the effect of feeling good and looking good.
- it helps the body to reduce the bad cholesterol (low density lipoprotein) which increases the risk of heart attacks.
- it may contribute to lowering of high blood pressure if done effectively.
- it contributes to reducing body weight.
- it helps to reduce stress, tension, anxiety such that it is used as psychotherapy in treating depression.
- it enhances sleep in people with mild sleep disorders.
- regular exercise helps to prevent cancer.
- It strengthens the bones and prevents osteoporosis.
- exercise increases intestinal mobility, encourages regular bowel motion and this reduces the risk of colon cancer.
- function of internal organs is also improved by regular exercise.
- studies have also shown that the risk of prostate cancer is reduced.
- the body produces natural pain killers (endorphins) which contribute to a feeling of wellness.
- exercise makes the lungs and heart work more efficiently and improve blood circulation.
- body muscles become stronger including the heart muscle, this brings longevity.
- regular exercise increases flexibility, strength and endurance.



CHECKING FOR YOUR HEALTH BEFORE BEGINNING VIGOROUS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The decision to carry out physical fitness programs cannot be taken lightly. You need to work with your doctor if you are older and having health problems. Your doctor can assist you in guiding you as to how much your body can take especially following major surgery or sickness. It is essential to be patient, do not try to do too much too soon and do not expect instant results. Be cautious if you have been inactive or bedridden for a long time. Other conditions that indicate a need for medical clearance are : -

- High blood pressure.
- Heart trouble.
- Family history of early stroke or heart attack deaths.
- Frequent dizzy spells.
- Extreme breathlessness after mild exertion.
- Arthritis or other bone problems.
- Severe muscular, ligaments or tendon problems.
- Other known or suspected disease.
- Following major surgery or implants.

HOW TO BRING EXERCISE INTO YOUR LIFE

You do not have to invest in expensive equipment or join a gymnastic group to make exercise a part of your life. The following are some different forms of activity that can be built into your life.

a) **Walking**

- This is the easiest to fit into your lifestyle and can be started gently. Walking helps to improve blood circulation, stimulates the heart and lungs, prolongs life by keeping you mobile.
- Aim for ten or fifteen minutes a day, building up to at least thirty minutes a day.
- Swing arms and walk fast towards slight sweat or to just slightly get out of breath.
- Wear comfortable steady shoes.

b) **Jogging**

- this helps to prevent heart disease and high blood pressure.
- it helps trigger the release of endorphins-chemicals that elevate your mood and reduce anxiety.
- start off with some brisk walking and then jogging about twice a week for 2 weeks.
- do not overdo, build up your speed gradually, the distance and the number of times per week.
- there is need to ensure that the shoes are well cushioned as a protective measure against injuries.
- overweight candidates need to consult their doctor before starting the jogging exercise.

c) **Dancing**

- good for all levels of fitness, such as ballroom for general mobility, aerobic dancing and tap dancing for lower body strength.
- best achieved through joining classes or groups in your area to make it sociable and fun.
- care should be taken when one has joint pains or injuries. The music that can be played can bring soothing and calmness.

d) **Swimming**

- it works out most of the major muscle groups.
- Improves strength, stamina and suppleness with little risk to joint damage.
- suitable for most weights even the obese.
- for those not able to swim, pool exercise is helpful.
- take precautions never swim until one hour after eating.
- always get help from experts to learn swimming to avoid disasters .

e) **Cycling**

- Medical experts maintain that cycling is the best type of exercise.
- Suitable for all age groups.
- It builds up muscle endurance and tones leg muscles
- It is healthy to invest in an exercise bicycle, however, the benefits are the same with any type of bicycle.
- Take note, wear reflective clothing when cycling on the road.

f) **Aerobics Classes**

- These are energetic type of exercises performed to music with a clear simple beat.
- It improves the efficiency of the heart and lungs, thus reducing heart attacks and circulation problems.
- Aerobics can either be of low impact or of high impact, consult your Doctor in times of sickness such as heart disease obesity lower back pain, joint pains

g) **Do's and dont's about exercise**

- consult your doctor if you suffer from high blood pressure, dizziness, blackouts, heart disease, diabetes, back pain, arthritis or other worrying medical conditions.
- do not exercise for more than twenty minutes at a time at first, build the sessions slowly.
- do stop and rest if you become breathless, feel pain or discomfort.
- do not exercise when you are tired ill or feverish.
- wait for at least two hours after a meal before exercise.
- do warm ups before strenuous exercise to reduce injuries.
- wear loose fitting cotton clothes which absorb sweat, also well made comfortable shoes.

MAKING YOUR CHOICE ABOUT EXERCISING.

It is best to find a form of exercise that you like and you can do easily. If you are unfit, get advice from your Doctor, first introduce more physical exertion into your everyday life like :

- move about more briskly in shops, offices, walk upstairs instead of using lifts or escalators.
- unwind at weekends by walking.
- do gardening instead of sitting.
- get off the bus one stop before your destination and complete the journey on foot.

CONCLUSION

The benefits of exercise are enormous. As one reflects over the past year, make the best choice and take care of your health. Always get expert advice when choosing to do exercises.

