

Sedentary lifestyle Versus Fitness Obsession- How NOT to overdo yourself



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In the era of Information Technology and Internet of Things man has become increasingly sedentary. Not surprisingly, we have also become the victims of life style disorders like diabetes, hypertension, obesity depressions, back pain, neck pain, cerebrovascular accidents etc. Our modern day lifestyle is characterised by many vices including an unhealthy diet, lack of physical fitness or adequate sleep, substance abuse, technology addiction etc. Every disease has got its own risk factors. Advantages of life style diseases are that their risk factors are modifiable. Workout or exercises are a preventive measure for life styles disease to some extent. Regular workouts under a trained personnel, preferably in an appropriate location, is the best way to keep oneself healthy. A well-balanced exercise program can not only improve general health and build endurance, but also slow many of the effects of ageing. However, there is an increasing trend now to workout excessively and to attain fitness in a short span.

The impact of over-exercising goes beyond the heart. Patients often come with joint pains, backaches, muscle/tendon tears, either because they go overboard on the treadmill or lift excess weight or indulge in too much strength training, too soon, in the gym.

Common Workout related Injuries

Aside from cardiac issues, workout injuries may be categorised as acute and overuse injuries. According to a study by orthopaedic doctors, knee injuries account for the highest (23%) among the common gym-related injuries, followed by injuries to the ankle and foot (16%), shoulder (14%), lower back (12%), neck (11%) and prolapsed or slipped disc (2%). The remaining 22% comprise injuries to the elbow, wrists, muscle strains, and tendon ruptures.

The intensity, duration, frequency of exercise and other factors that determine how well physical training benefits fitness

also appears to affect the risk of injury. For example, excessive box jumps causes risk to knees and Achilles tendons. Bench presses may result in injury to the rotator cuff of shoulder. Dropping down on one knee can permanently damage kneecaps. Wrist sprain is common in weight lifting. Similarly, overhead lifts relates to a risk of injury to the back.

Precautions before workout

Prevention of workout injuries have become an important concern due to the increasing incidence of injuries. Anyone can sustain an exercise injury, regardless of their expertise or fitness level. There are easy things you can do to prevent injuries while working out.

But first, pay attention to this general rule. Before you start an exercise regime, a baseline investigation with a vitals check, blood routine, Vitamin D, B12 and HbA1c should be carried out. Women over 45 years of age, or men over 55 or anyone with a co-morbid medical conditions should consult a health care provider prior to starting an exercise program. Blood workup with cardiac evaluation, Vitamin D3 levels, thyroid function tests and cholesterol profile should be undertaken at baseline and repeated at least once a year.



Here are few guidelines for avoiding workout injuries:

Warm-up and cool-down: Never be in a hurry to complete exercises. Workout session should begin with a warm-up and end with a cool-down period. Warm-up gradually increases heart rate and loosens muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints. A cool-down after work out is equally important to slowly bring heart rate and blood pressure back to normal. Cool down period should last twice as long as warm up. One must take care to slow movements and lessen the intensity of movements for at least 10 minutes before stopping completely. Walking for 5 to 10 minutes after working out is a good way to cool down.

Stretching Exercises: Stretching techniques are different for different group of muscles. Stretches should be begun slowly until reaching a point of muscle tension. Each stretch should be held for 10 to 20 seconds, then released slowly. Inhale before stretch and exhale as you release. Each stretch should be done only once and never stretch to the point of pain. Dynamic stretching is preferred before workout, while static stretch after.

Start slow: Always start slowly when you begin an exercise routine. Gradually build up the intensity, duration, and frequency without pushing too hard.

Cross-train: Vary the workout regimes. Don't overuse one set of muscles. Repeating the same muscle movements

leads to overuse injuries. Some ways to cross-train include: jogging or cycling on Day 1, weight training on Day 2, swimming on Day 3 etc.

Tailor your workout for problem areas. For example, if you have arthritis in your knees, do non-weight bearing strengthening of limbs. Give equal importance to breathing exercises too.

Know your limits: You can get fit without feeling pain. Don't push your body to the point of getting hurt. Pain might be an indication that you are injured. Stop and rest for a day before resuming work out. If pain persists, visit your doctor before proceeding further.

Hydration and nutrition: Drink enough water to prevent dehydration. Individuals who are dehydrated can succumb to muscle cramps during workouts. Eating a small meal or snacking every 2 to 3 hours will give a steady source of energy for your body. A healthy carb and protein diet will help to replenish energy stores after workouts.

Workout with a trainer. A trainer can help create a safe exercise program, and thereby avoid workout injuries.

Choose the right gear: Wear the proper gear for your workout. Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes that allows you to move freely. If you choose to run, then wear a good pair of footwear. Breathable wears are a new fad in the fitness market but they do allow for perspiration control.

Importance for rest: Schedule regular days off from exercise and rest when tired. Do not exercise if you are fatigued or in pain.

What to do when you get injured during workouts?

Injuries may happen, no matter how careful you are. If you develop a workout injury, 'RICE' method is one common algorithm:

R: Rest the injury

I: Ice the injury

C: Compression bandage

E: Elevate the injured limb

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) can help reduce pain and inflammation but check with your doctor before using them. Prognosis of workout injuries depends on the extend of injury and the site involved. Most workout injuries are mild and will heal by itself within a month or so. If the injury does not improve within a week, or if it worsens, seek medical care.

Do not repeat the activity that triggered the injury until you have recovered completely. You can still be active as long as you don't strain the injured area. In fact, staying active helps you heal quicker. Try a new workout while your injury heals. For example, if you sprain your ankle, exercise your arms instead. After you have fully recovered from the injury or remain pain-free for more than a week, start back the workout regime at a slow pace. Don't try to work out with the same enthusiasm you did before the injury. You will need to rebuild the muscle strength and endurance.

Medical experts and scientists all agree that exercise in itself cannot be blamed for any tragic clinical outcomes, and that it is mainly the yearning for pushing the body undesirably to test its limit, often as an outcome of social pressure, that is at the crux of the problem. But that doesn't mean one can completely negate all physical activity. The solution lies is spending enough time on workouts, knowing your body's limits and diversifying one's workout routine. As someone rightly said, "take care of your body, as it is the only place you have to live".