8 Food For Thought FIT FOR LIFE, SUNDAY 1 APRIL 2018

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THE prevalence of obesity in Malaysia is as high as 17.7%, while 30.0% of Malaysians are overweight, as reported in the 2015 Malaysian National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS). Unfortunately, this problem is not isolated to just adults as the

Unfortunately, this problem is not isolated to just adults, as the prevalence of obesity among children is also high.
In 2010, the Nutristudy Project conducted by the Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM) reported about 16%, or one in six, children aged four to six years, were overweight or obese

Another study by NSM in 2013 called the MyBreakfast study showed that 28%, or one in four, primary school children were overweight or obese

These worrying results mean that we need to take immediate action.

Obesity is a direct result of one's

lifestyle, which includes unhealthy diets or eating habits, and a seden-tary lifestyle that is lacking in phys-ical activity.

In order to combat overweight and obesity problems in our coun-try, Malaysians should start being more physically active every day. Food represents energy intake,

and only by balancing it with one's energy expenditure through physi-cal activity can we achieve energy balance. Regular physical activity can

reduce the risk of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer, as well as maintaining healthy weight, thus preventing overweight and obesity.

Being physically active every day is a necessary component of a healthy lifestyle and it improves your physical and mental health.

A simple method to achieve this

A simple method to achieve this is to walk more.

Regardless of your choice,
whether it is to work out in a gym, in your home or outdoors, ther are some basic physical activity principles that should be followed in order to make the most of your workout

Getting FITT

An easy-to-follow principle used to assess the effectiveness of your physical activities is the FITT

- physical activities is the FITT
 Principle.
 FITT is short for:
 Frequency: how often do you
 do physical activities, e.g. three
 days in a week.
 Intensity: how hard are the
 physical activities (low, moderate,
 or high intensity) e.g. jougning in
- physical activities (low, moterate, or high intensity), e.g. jogging in the park can be made more intense by adding in short sprints or maintaining the pace uphill.

 Time: how long each session
- Type: which type of physical activity, such as cardiovascular (e.g. running), strength training

(e.g. using weights), or flexibility and balance (e.g. yoga). Remember that doing some physical activity is better than

If you are inactive, it is never too late to start with small amounts of physical activity as part of your daily routine and gradually increasing the frequency, intensity and duration over time

Making it work for you

Before you start, you should know your current fitness level first in order to proceed to make a more concrete physical activity plan on how you can go about

achieving your goal.

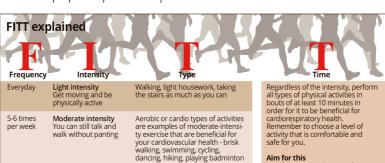
For instance, you can find out
your current fitness level by taking



Being physically active every day is a necessary component of a healthy lifestyle, and it improves your physical and mental health. — dpa

Moving for health

Be more physically active if you want better health.



Varying intensity

2-3 times

Vigorous cardio-type activities -fast cycling, walking briskly up a hill, playing basketball You have to pause for breath to say more than

> Activities that increase strength, flexibility and endurance -weightlifting using dumb bells, stretching exercises, tai chi, yoga, push-ups, distance bicycling

- Aim for this
 > Children = 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical
- Adult = 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activities on at least five to six days a week,
- least rive to six days a week, preferably daily > Elderly = 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activities on at least five to six days a week, preferably daily

a walk (or a jog) for one kilometre, then take a quick check of the time you took, your pulse rate and your breathing rate.

Do take note of any other signs your body may be sending you as you walk (e.g. muscle aches, joint pains) and adjust your speed

panisy and adjust your speeu accordingly. Take note of your breathing and slow down if you feel any difficul-ties in catching your breath. If you want to get started with weights, be sure to start with light

weights and work your way up; aim for a weight that you can han-dle throughout the training rou-

tine, while still keeping your move ments slow and controlled. As you progress and improve, you can either opt for a heavier

weight or increase the number of repetitions.
You can also work on your flexi-

bility by doing simple stretching exercises, e.g. try touching your toes or see how far past your toes you can push the tips of your fin-

gers.
Who says physical activities has to be boring?
There are plenty of ways to make it fun and exciting.
If you are into sports, you can join a group of like-minded friends to play football, futsal, badminton, tennis or squash.
Other physical activities that can be done alone or with other people

be done alone or with other people include swimming, cycling, jogging,

r even walking. For people who absolutely can-

not stop watching television, you can even perform some physical activities while watching TV by getting on a treadmill, elliptical machine or stationary bicycle.

There is really no reason why you should be sitting still for an hour when you could easily

Above all, don't neglect the importance of warming up before any major activities and cooling off

It takes practice

Getting started is easy, but the real challenge is in staying motivat-

ed to continue.

Take the first step to be physically active every day by making

small changes to your daily rou-

You can park further from your destination so you can walk more or take the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator – every little bit counts!

Once you have become accustomed to this, you will find that what you once thought was a chore is now nothing more than a daily routing. routine.

Prepare yourself to mentally accept the responsibility for feeling and being healthier by making the necessary commitment to be more physically active.

Remember to cut yourself some slack and approach physical activities with a "growth" mindset and think of it as a skill, i.e. it may be something you are bad at in the beginning but you will get better with time.

Being overweight or obese does not mean that something is wrong with you, it just means that you have to do something about it. Precautions should be observed,

especially if you are already suffer-ing from some form of chronic disease, such as hypertension, heart disease, or diabetes. You should always remember

that a healthy lifestyle involves eating healthy, being physically active and having enough sleep.

Dr Zawiah Hashim and Dr Chin Yit Siew are council members of the Malaysian Association for the Study of Obesity (MASO). This article is con-tributed by Nutrition Month Malaysia (NMM) 2018, an annual community nutrition education initiative jointly organised by NSM, the Malaysian Dietitians' Association (MDA) and MASO. To obtain more information on healthy eating and active lifestyle, visit www.nutritionmonthmalaysia. org.my or the NMM Facebook page.