



Aerobic activities such as badminton burns more calories and also improves your stamina.

Let's get moving!

A regular 'dose' of physical activity is vital for good health.

By Prof Dr NORIMAH A. KARIM and Dr ZAWIAH HASHIM

THE biggest threat to Malaysians comes in the form of non-communicable disease (NCDs). These include diseases such as type 2 diabetes, obesity, heart disease, hypertension and cancer.

The 2011 National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) revealed disturbing statistics regarding the rising trend of NCDs. The results of the survey showed that the elderly are not the only ones affected. Even the young are not spared.

You should certainly be aware that the two main culprits for the increasing prevalence of NCDs are unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles (or physical inactivity).

While practising a healthy diet is important, you also need to incorporate physical activity and exercise into your daily routines. This will help push back the rising tide of NCDs.

Reaping the benefits

Although physical activity sounds like a chore, it provides you with great benefits, which include:

- Reduced risk of developing NCDs

Exercise and physical activity help prevent chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension and certain cancers. They increase the level of HDL (good) cholesterol, make your heart muscles work by pumping more blood to the body, help stabilise your blood sugar levels, and reduce your risk of developing cancers.

- Weight control

Leading an active lifestyle helps maintain a healthy body weight; this can be achieved by balancing what you eat to match your body's output.

- Improve mood and mental health

Regular physical activity can stimulate the secretion of various chemicals such as endorphins

in the brain. These may leave you feeling happier and more relaxed, thus making you feel better about yourself and your appearance when you exercise regularly. This will boost your self-confidence and also improve your self-esteem.

- Increase life expectancy

Better physical fitness means a reduction in the risk of premature death. According to the US Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention (CDC), you can increase your life span by doing at least 150 minutes (or five times a week, 30 minutes each time) a week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity.

- Strengthen bones and muscles

Research has shown that regularly carrying out aerobic exercises, together with muscle and bone strengthening physical activities on a moderately intense level, can slow the loss of bone density that comes with age.

Muscle-strengthening activities help you increase and/or maintain your muscle mass and strength; it is vital to protect your bones, joints and muscles as you get older.

Stop delaying, just get started

No time? That's a poor excuse! There are 1,440 minutes (24 hours) in a day, so spending 30 minutes a day to exercise will only take up 2% of your whole day. If there's something you need to quit, it's to quit finding excuses and just start exercising.

The Malaysian Dietary Guidelines (MDG) recommends a mix of aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities five times a week for a duration of 30 minutes each, for a total of 150 minutes a week.

You can begin by choosing a variety of different ways to boost your activity level. One way is by doing moderate-intensity physical activities such as brisk walking, cycling, or dancing, for five or six days a week, preferably daily.

Participate in activities that

increase your flexibility, strength and muscle strength as frequently as two to three times a week. You should aim for at least 30 minutes daily. Your target is to make your body less static; get in gear and move.

Even 10 minutes of exercise counts. The recommendation of 30 minutes of exercise can be split into shorter sessions. Do 15 minutes in the morning, and 15 minutes at night; that's equivalent to 30 minutes a day. As your fitness level improves, gradually increase the intensity and amount of time spent exercising.

Here are some tips on what you can aim to do:

Active anytime, anywhere, everyday

Go the extra mile by moving your body and staying active. Any type of physical activity uses energy/calories.

- Make a conscious effort to take the stairs instead of the lift or escalator.

- Take a walk or cycle when you go somewhere nearby.

- Do more housework around the house like sweeping, mopping, gardening, etc.

- Regardless of whether you

drive or take public transport, park or get off the bus/MRT/taxi further away from your destination and walk there.

- Do some stretches, exercises, or pedal a stationary bike while watching television.

- Briskly step up and down the first two steps of your house's staircase. Do this for about 10 minutes in the morning and in the evening.

Work your heart out, five to six times a week

Aerobic exercises burn more calories than normal daily activities and also improve your stamina while exercising your muscles. Aim for a minimum of 30 minutes of these activities:

- Play badminton, ping-pong, basketball, or any other sport with your friends or colleagues.

- Go for brisk walking, jogging, or cycling.

- Start swimming.

- Get your family involved in sports like football, futsal, badminton racquetball, tennis, squash, basketball, or rock-climbing.

Stretch your muscles and build up your strength and endurance, two to three times a week



Simply walking more can be the first step to incorporating exercise into your daily routine.

Some activities help to build your endurance and muscle strength, and at the same time, improve flexibility too. These activities are equally important for your overall health:

- Work out with weights, a fitness ball, or exercise bands.

- Work out using your own body weight such as push ups, sit ups, lunges or squats.

- Learn and start practising martial arts, dance, tai chi or yoga.

- Be sure to include running and distance cycling to increase your endurance level.

- Spread out any physical activity that targets endurance in order to avoid excessive fatigue and to reduce your risk of injury.

As you can see, you actually have plenty of opportunities to engage in daily physical activities like walk-

ing, gardening, doing household chores or walking up and down the stairs. You should keep this up and gradually increase the intensity of these activities day by day.

Ultimately, you should then include a more comprehensive workout routine into your daily life.

■ This article is courtesy of Nutrition Month Malaysia 2013, an annual community nutrition education programme by Nutrition Society of Malaysia, Malaysian Dietitians' Association and Malaysian Association for the Study of Obesity. The NMM 2013 programme is supported by our main sponsor, Danone Dumex (M) Sdn Bhd; and our co-sponsors A Clouet & Co (KL) Sdn Bhd (Ayam Brand), Dutch Lady Milk Industries Bhd, Gardenia Bakeries

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