



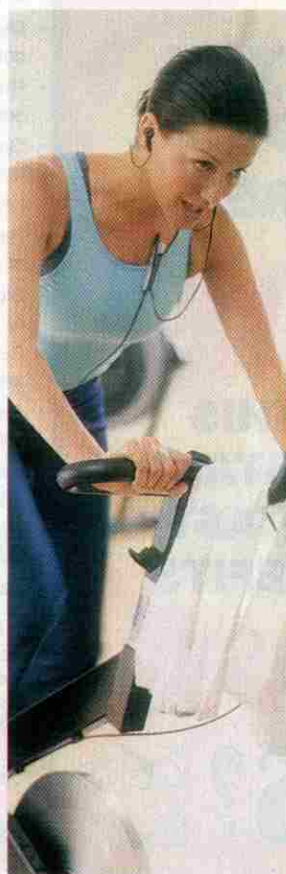
No Pain, More Gain

Tai chi is popular among those who want a gentle, yet effective form of exercise. This ancient martial art is meditative in nature and combines slow, controlled motions of the head, eyes, torso and limbs while focusing on breathing. Well-known benefits include improved balance, flexibility, strength, endurance and mental well-being. A recent study in the *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation* (Oct. 2002) has now added that women who practised tai chi scored higher on bone mineral density testing than those who did not exercise, suggesting that this gentle form of movement may keep bones strong, too. This is another nudge away from the old adage “no pain, no gain” and further proof that “no pain, more gain” is closer to the truth when it comes to exercise.

Obesity Cuts Life Span

As the smoking epidemic wanes in the western world and we find ourselves in the midst of an obesity epidemic, two important new studies have emerged showing that obesity can, on average, cut more than a decade from a person's life. Reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, the studies found that obesity is of particular concern for younger adults in their 20s and 30s. The risk is greatest for obese African-American men, who stand to lose about 20 years of life, even after accounting for smoking. Researchers recommend 30 to 60 minutes of moderate activity each day to move each of us in the right direction—toward better health, vitality and longevity.

References available on request.



Tune In and Tone Up

Dreading your next workout? Try adding your favourite music to the mix and you may find yourself more motivated to continue physically and mentally. De Bourdeaudhij and colleagues, contributors to the *International Journal of Obesity and Related Metabolic Disorders* (Aug. 26, 2002) found that overweight adolescents were willing to exercise longer when allowed to play their top picks in music. In addition, C. J. Murrock reported in *Rehabilitation Nursing* (Nov.-Dec. 2002) that people who work out while listening to music report having a better overall mood than those without the musical motivation. So, music not only soothes the savage beast, it moves it, too.

Syndrome X: Reduce your risk with exercise

While exercise has been shown to reduce obesity and other health conditions, until recently little evidence has shown it can also help prevent Syndrome X, a metabolic illness largely characterized by resistance to insulin. Syndrome X, or metabolic syndrome, has been proven to be a lead-in to developing diabetes and heart disease, and may affect an estimated 20 to 40 per cent of North Americans.

Dr. David E. Laaksonen and his team of researchers at the University of Kuopio in Finland studied a group of middle-aged men, taking into account their lifestyle and weekly exercise habits. They found that men who exercised more than three hours per week decreased their risk of developing metabolic syndrome by about 50 per cent compared to those who exercised 60 minutes or less.

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