

Good Health: Responsibility or Liability?

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Abstract

Good Health is a universal desire. It almost never comes to us as a God's gift but needs to be eventually worked upon and built. Its benefits can be reaped throughout the course of one's life particularly in the later half. Today, mankind is cognizant of benefits of a healthy body as compared to olden times, but even with an increasing awareness fulfilment of this desire has become more far-fetched than any other. Somehow, engagement of human beings with their external environment always supersedes the engagement with their internal environment. This gives way to ignoring our health in our day to day lives which further paves way to various health problems including arthritis and early joint pains that are one of the major health hazards affecting a large percentage of population. Ignorance towards one's own health may not show its effects immediately but as the body starts wearing off, these effects become more obvious and demand our attention. Working on one's own body and health from the very beginning can prevent or delay the onset of many health-related issues. It is the best way to understand our body from the very start so that as the age progresses, we human beings who have the ability to use their cerebrums, can learn to judge correctly what our body needs at the various stages of our lives and act in accordance to its demands.

Keywords: *Good Health; Healthy Body; Exercise*

Parameters of good health

"He who has health has hope; and he who has hope has everything", is a common Arabian proverb, which supports the notion that healthy body leads to healthy mind and vice versa. A healthy body is desired by almost everyone. Some aim to be the healthiest they could be and still others are already benefitting from their healthy body they have acquired over a period of time. But still, there are millions of people who follow unhealthy lifestyle and hence encounter various health issues like joint and skeletal problems, metabolic disorders, overweight, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension and so on [1]. These are considered as strong markers of poor health and are a result of unhealthy lifestyle. According to WHO, about 60% of factors that are related to health and quality of life have a correlation to lifestyle [2]. With the aim to enjoy healthy ageing and work towards having a good health we must first understand what makes a 'Good Health'. There are various factors which help contribute to a healthy lifestyle eventually leading upto a good health. These include balanced diet regimen, sufficient physical activity, regular and adequate amount of sleep, maintaining healthy body weight with body-mass index (BMI) between 19 and 24, abstinence from addiction causing drugs including tobacco and alcohol. Healthcare professionals use numerous parameters; like heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, respiration rate, electrocardiogram, blood glucose, blood oxygen saturation, body-fat ratios, BMI, height-to-weight ranges; to classify a human body as a healthy body. These parameters are highly influenced by our day-to-day activities, stress levels, eating habits and environment. To be concise, one's lifestyle should highly be considered in determining one's health.

Should exercise and movement be a priority?

According to Physical Activity Guidelines (PAG) 2018, children between 3 - 5 years of age group should be active throughout the day to enhance growth and development [3]. Youth between the age group of 6 and 17 years are required to do at least 1 hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity like walking or running. Additionally, they should also be performing activities that help in making their bones and muscles strong. For example, playing badminton, tennis, basketball or jumping rope etc. Playing sports helps in improving the heart health, enhancing the strength and endurance of muscles, maintains and increases body's overall flexibility and movement of joints. For adults, the recommended amount of physical activity should be at least 150-300 minutes of aerobic activity of moderate intensity like brisk walking or dancing each week in addition to muscle strengthening exercises like lifting weights or push-ups, at least twice each week.

In today's time, people have undergone a major change in their lifestyle which ranges from being overly worked up in professional life leading to lack of movement and exercise to eating unhealthily. This is a result of lack of personal time which could have been utilized in developing good eating habits. For instance, at the professional front there are many people who spend hours glued to their desktops to meet the deadlines or completing targets at their workplace. What they forget is, their own body should also be a target for them. Health for them takes a back seat and they spend hours sitting in a slouched posture leading to muscular imbalances, forward head posture, back pain and neck pain, an increased risk of heart disease and high blood pressure. In worst cases, some even develop radiating pain in arm or legs due to nerve impingement in the spine or at the hips. Due to workload peaking beyond their handling capacity, their eating habits too go into a toss. Such people are more prone to incline towards unhealthy eating due to being deficient in time to devote to mindful eating. Unhealthy living in these people eventually leads to development of discomfort and pain most commonly felt in the back or neck or sometimes both, which ultimately and untimely leads to a reduced work efficiency. This declining efficiency to keep up with work leads to mental stress that further declines the physical health as well as the mental health. In a way, this vicious cycle sees no end. Therefore, for people who have long hours of sitting in their daily routine are always advised to take frequent breaks from sitting in order to break the slouched posture and relax the mind and body. In addition, regular moderate intensity exercises will help them keep their back and neck muscles strong which mostly get over worked during prolonged sitting. Practicing meditation, engaging in some form of extra-curricular activity like sports or pursuing a hobby can help in keeping mental stress at bay. Simultaneously, mindful and healthy eating habits can pump the body with the required nutrition necessary to fuel the daily activities.

Arthritis: An uninvited friend for life

Lifestyle factors have been associated with development of many chronic disorders. Individuals who lead a lifestyle that lacks focus upon movement, activity, mindful eating, positivity, and mental well-being are more prone to develop an unwanted inflammatory condition in joints, called as Arthritis [4-6]. It is the tenderness and swelling of one or more joints caused due to wear and tear of cartilage that covers the surface of articulating bones. Most common symptoms of arthritis are joint pain, swelling, redness, tenderness, reduced range of motion. Recently, Zaccardelli, *et al.* group have extensively discussed the potential implications of lifestyle changes in reducing the risk of developing of rheumatoid arthritis [7]. The review reflects on the role played by lifestyle factors: like cigarette smoking, excess body weight, lack of physical activity, dietary intake, and dental health, in RA pathogenesis. According to National Centre for Health Statistics (NCHS), 2014:

- Arthritis affects more than 1 in 5 adults aged 18 and above.
- Arthritis affects more women (25.9%) than men (18.6%) aged 18 and over. It is more likely for women to report a diagnosis of arthritis than men.
- Prevalence of arthritis increases with age for both men and women.

There is no sure way to prevent arthritis, but steps can be taken to reduce the risk or delay the potential onset of certain types of arthritis. There are certain risk factors that cannot be modified. For example, being a female or having a family history of arthritis makes the person a potential, though not certain, a candidate for arthritis and these risk factors cannot be modified. On the contrary, there are factors which can be taken control of, in order to reduce risk, delay onset or altogether prevent arthritis. According to NCHS, the treatment of arthritis may incorporate a combination of lifestyle changes such as maintaining healthy weight, doing appropriate and regular exercises, reducing stress on affected joints and taking adequate rest. In severe cases, medication, surgery or complementary or alternative treatment may also be required. In people engaging in sports activities, adequate training, use of proper equipment and safe play can prevent ACL tears, injury to shoulder joint that may lead to arthritis several years later.

Bone health and exercise

Apart from making efforts to prevent oneself from being knocked down by arthritis, it is also a responsibility and a wise call to do general body exercises with the view of keeping the bones healthy. Before beginning to exercise, it is of utmost importance to consider what role does exercise play in keeping the bones healthy and strong. Bones are a living tissue just like muscles. It is continuously undergoing remodeling, which means new bone tissue is forming replacing the old bone tissue. However, later in life, the process of old bone tissue removal is faster than new bone tissue formation which is why the bones get weaker and thinner with increasing age. Hence, slowing down of the weakening of bones happens naturally with exercises. According to National Institute of Health (NIH), young individuals who exercise regularly achieve greater peak bone mass (maximum bone density and strength) compared to those who do not exercise. Individuals more than 20 years of age can help prevent bone loss by regular exercise. Regular exercises can also help in maintaining coordination and balance and strength of muscles which in turn can prevent any falls and related fractures. This is particularly important in older people and those who suffer with osteoporosis or osteopenia. Hence, it is always advisable to start weight bearing exercises at a young age which can help building up strong bones and alleviating the risk of osteopenia or osteoporosis.

The best exercises which can enhance bone health are weight bearing exercises and resistance exercises. In weight bearing exercises a person is required to exercise against gravity. Therefore, walking, jogging, hiking, dancing, climbing stairs, lunges, pushups, playing sports like tennis, badminton are some of the best exercises where the body weight can be used to build up bone strength. On the other hand, resistance exercises incorporate the use of external resistance like lifting weights, use of therabands and weight cuffs which can provide resistance to individual body part and can help in isolated training.

Conclusion

It is important to summarize that a healthy body comes from a healthy mind and vice versa. Good health is a composite of mindful eating, regular exercise, positive attitude, staying away from stress and a harmony between the mind and body. Focusing on all these parameters with the aim of achieving a good health will reap the best of results. Hence, it would be very appropriate to say that if we take care of our body today, it will take care of us.

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