

BRUNCH



WELLNESS

GET SPORTY

If the attractions of the gym fail to get you off your couch, it's time to rediscover some well loved sports that will put you on the path to fitness again

by Colleen Braganza

THE CHAMPION
Olympic superstar Michael Phelps made swimming look terribly easy at the recently concluded Beijing Olympics

AFTER MONTHS at the gym, marketing executive Ritu Khanna had it with the monotony of her workout. "I can't take it any more. What's the point of walking or cycling when you aren't going anywhere," she told a friend.

Khanna had a point. After the initial excitement of running on the treadmill or cross-trainer wears out, all except the most driven gym goer tires of the monotony of the gym.

What many of us don't realize is that going to the gym is not the only option we have to keep fit. "Any form of aerobic activity is good for us. Sports like tennis, badminton or football make you run. This exercise pumps up the heart rate. When that happens, you burn fat," says Dr Meenakshi Jain, consultant, internal medicine, Max Healthcare.

Now before you roll off your couch in excitement and head for the nearest sports store, let's make three things clear: First, you need to be reasonably fit to take up any sport in the first place. "You have to be pre-fit to play tennis because it takes a lot out of you," says former ATP player Praveen Kumar Sreenivasan. This holds true for any sport.

Second, "if you are not used to exercise and are a smoker, diabetic or above the age of 40, it's best to see a doctor for a cardiac evaluation before you take up any strenuous activity," says Dr Jain.

Third, like any other form of exercise, you need to play the sport regularly for any kind of health benefit.

The good part is that playing a sport offers you more than that. It helps you make friends, equips you with a skill you will be proud of, makes you competitive and keeps you motivated.

We list five sports that will keep you on your toes.

SWIMMING

Olympic champion Michael Phelps won his eight golds with such effortless ease that swimming looks like the easiest thing to do. No, it's not that easy, but it *is* rewarding.

"Swimming is the safest and most practical way to exercise"

That's what fitness instructor Nalina Talwalkar says. "It doesn't strain your joints. When you are in the water your body is buoyant. That minimises the risk of injuries. Swimming strengthens your leg and back muscles and helps tone your body." That's why swimming is a good option for people who are overweight / not used to exercise.

DRAWBACK: Swimming can become boring if done alone. Many people also avoid swimming because they claim it makes them dark.

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**MIND
BODY
SOUL**



SHIKHA SHARMA

Gender riddle

AS I had discussed in my last column, women's fat cells are very different from men's, which can be seen very clearly in the way women and men lose weight when following unisex food regulations and exercise plans. But it's interesting to see how exactly they differ when it comes to common foods and exercises that people hoping to lose weight usually resort to, so here are some examples.

EATING LESS

When people first begin to notice

that they're slightly overweight, they begin to eat less, or at least try and consume fewer calories. The effects on men and women are as follows.

Men: They tend to lose muscle weight which shows on the scales as weight loss. The old General Motors diet frequently led to a weight loss of about three kilos a week among men, all thanks to muscle and water loss together with a little fat loss.

Women: The same diet plan makes women feel starved, which leads to a better control over fat metabolism. This is not as good as it sounds. It means that the fat cells become more efficient at storing fat, which means that beyond water loss, a woman will not lose much weight per week on this diet.

EXERCISE

Men: Men typically burn more carbohydrates and fat during high intensity exercises.

Women: They burn more fat when they do low intensity, long duration exercises.

FAD DIETS

Men: They can knock off weight on high protein diets because they have



a higher protein metabolising capacity than women.

Women: They tend to lose weight better when on high fibre diets, because fibre is an excellent fat binder and helps flush out fat better.

EATING FATTY FOOD

Unfortunately, eating fatty food affects women more since their fat cells are eager to store fat. This is because women are prone to hormonal imbalances, primarily because of the cyclical hormonal flux during

menstruation, and also because of the effects of pregnancy and menopause. If a woman takes additional hormones during pregnancy, that only adds to the imbalances. All this means that a woman's fat cells react to hormones within the body all the time.

This is why women who want to lose weight must realise that their hormonal status plays an important role in their effort to lose weight.

In fact, many weight loss clinics today ensure that women detox and purge their liver of accumulated hormonal residues before they attempt to lose weight. This makes it easier for them to burn fat.

To summarise, the best way to tame the female fat cell is to decrease the consumption of fatty foods in the estrogenic phase of the menstrual cycle, eat more fibre always, eat small frequent meals that are primarily unrefined, control water retention, do low intensity, long duration exercises and, finally, detoxify the liver.

Concluded

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ILLUSTRATIONS: DURGA



TENNIS

"Tennis gives you an overall workout"

So says former ATP player Praveen Kumar Sreenivasan. "A lot of things happen in tennis. The game involves speed, hand-eye coordination and strength. You get a cardio workout and exercise your mind every second when you anticipate strategies and make judgements accordingly. It is an intelligent game."

Depending on the level of performance and intensity, the average non-professional player can expend about 300-400 calories in a single game of tennis, says Sreenivasan. Tennis also helps you make friends. "Walk into a club and people will be happy to play with you. You'll be easily invited for a game."

DRAWBACK: You have to be a member of a club with tennis facilities. That is usually expensive. "We need more public courts if the game has to flourish," says Sreenivasan, who coaches youngsters for the Apollo Tennis Mission 2018.



CRICKET

Vociferous critics of cricket say it is a lazy game because it is not as intensive as as squash, tennis or football. But India A physiotherapist Vaibhav Daga begs to differ. In his words:

"Cricket addresses all aspects of fitness"

He adds, "Like tennis, it is a game of speed and endurance. The running and bowling helps build cardiovascular endurance.

"You may not play cricket continuously like tennis or squash but remember, a cricket match lasts longer than either one of these games." Thus the total energy expended isn't very different.

Daga points out that bowling also helps strengthen shoulder and back muscles.

DRAWBACK: Playing cricket takes time. You cannot play every day because even the shortest match requires a minimum of three hours to play.



SQUASH

Squash is an incredibly challenging game that tests your endurance to the limit, exercises major muscle groups and stimulates your mind. Says top squash coach Amitoj Inder Singh:

"Squash is a vigorous sport requiring constant movement"

He says that it combines elements of physical fitness - endurance, speed, stamina, strength, balance and coordination. "It is a complex sport that requires decision-making in an ever-changing environment... You develop all aspects related to decision-making."

Beginners expend about 100-200 calories an hour while advanced players expend about 600 calories an hour.

DRAWBACK: Squash requires a high degree of fitness. It is not a game to take up after a long period of inactivity. Its facilities are not very accessible either.



GOLF

Of all the sports listed here, golf is probably the least physically challenging. That's why it is a good choice for those not used to physical exertion. "Golf is more of a game for someone who wants to get away from work. You won't find many people picking up the game for fitness purposes," says sports fitness specialist and avid golfer Pritam Saikia.

"Many people play golf to de-stress"

That isn't a bad thing at all, says Dr Jain. "At the end of the day, relaxation is important for your overall well being too. Anything that takes you away from stress and relaxes you is good for your body," she adds. Golf can keep you fit too if you keep a constant pace. "If you play regularly, it offers a good cardio workout and strengthens your body," says Saikia.

DRAWBACK: Golf is perceived as an elite game not without reason. Membership to golf courses is pricey and equipment is expensive.
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