

Fitness and Food

A lot has been written about sedentary lifestyles, obesity, and the negative affects of both. In response, a lot has been written about the importance of regular physical activity and good nutrition.

Some people find maintaining a healthy diet difficult and some people find being physically active on a regular basis difficult. Following on from this, some people say they exercise so they can “eat what they like” and others say they eat what they like “because they exercise”. The harsh reality is the two go together. To be fit and healthy you need to exercise regularly and have a nutritious and balanced diet. One without the other is simply not enough. You don't see the world's fittest people being lax with diet and you don't see the world's healthiest people being lazy couch potatoes. So, as tedious and repetitive as it may seem, the message remains the same – to be fit and healthy you must exercise regularly and you must have a healthy diet. There really are no short cuts.

Exercising regularly means:

- undertaking some cardio or aerobic exercise that gets your heart rate up to a level of continuous 'puffing' for 30-40 minutes at a time, 4-5 times a week;
- undertaking some weight bearing exercise(s) which works and strengthens your muscles and bones 2-3 times a week; and
- undertaking some flexibility or stretching exercises 2-3 times a week to maximise the range of motion around important joints.

Remember, some activities may meet more than one of these criteria at the same time. For example, fast walking or jogging may be both a continuous 'puffing' or cardio exercise as well as a weight bearing exercise.

Having a healthy diet means:

- eating plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits;
- eating lots of cereals, including breads, rice and pasta;
- choosing lean meat, fish and poultry;
- choosing low fat dairy products such as milk, yoghurt, cheese;
- limiting fats, oils and salt;
- having a low intake of sugar and foods that contain sugars; and
- limiting the intake of alcohol.

The fit and healthy recipe is simple – exercise regularly and have a nutritious diet. Like all good recipes this one has been the same for a long time now and it will continue to be the same well into the future.