



I imagine the average age of RGBB members, like the BBBF in Bahrain, is 40 plus so we can all relate to my comments. Do you feel that you have slowed down as you get older? Do you feel stiff if you take up exercise after a break of a few years? Do you get out of breath when you walk up the stairs? ...or when you take a dip in the pool?

Do you put those feelings down to age and banish exercise as something you did when you were young? Now hang on, there's Tom Watson coming 2nd in the British Open at the age of 59 and Lance Armstrong climbing the podium in Paris at the end of Le Tour at the age of 37. A 40 year old would think Tom is old and a 25 year old would think Lance is old so what relevance do their performances have for us.

It is true that both are exceptional athletes. They have maintained fitness levels that mean they can continue in their chosen sports although past the average age for excellent performances. But there are many other examples of athletes recording performances when they should be past it. Ryan Giggs and David Beckham are two names from football.

So what's their secret ?

First of all people of all ages and physical condition will benefit from exercise and physical activity. Don't be afraid to exercise and think that it's too strenuous. In fact it's safe to exercise at any age and older adults harm their health more by not exercising.

If you're inactive you lose ground in four areas:

- **Strength**
To combat this you need strength exercises that build your muscles and increase your metabolic rate that helps to control weight and blood sugar levels.
- **Balance**
Balance exercises build leg muscles and this helps to prevent falls.
- **Flexibility**
Stretching exercises give you more freedom of movement which will allow you to be more active.

- **Endurance**
Endurance exercises are any activity that increase your heart rate and breathing for an extended period of time – walking (with or without a dog), jogging, swimming, cycling, climbing stairs, cleaning the car but when you start do it gradually. Walk before you run. Make sure you drink plenty of water, 8 – 10 glasses a day and stop if you feel dizzy.

What are the effects?

The Framingham Heart Study, conducted over 40 years, showed that for men and women aged 50 or more, moderate physical activity increased total life expectancy by 1.3 to 1.5 years for men and slightly less for women without suffering any cardiovascular disease.

High levels of physical exercise added 3.5 – 3.7 years to total life expectancy and 3.3 years free of cardiovascular disease. The authors concluded that 'Our study suggests that following an active lifestyle is an effective way to achieve healthy aging'

Plus there are the hidden benefits of exercise.

- Exercise improves sleep
- It keeps your brain sharp
- Releases chemicals that make you feel good about yourself
- Gives you more energy

But before you grab your shoes, go check with your usual physician that it is safe for you to undertake a particular exercise. Plus he or she will check your blood pressure, height and weight ((to calculate Body Mass Index), pulse rate, cholesterol and blood sugar. If you get the go ahead then these readings give you a base for improvement in the coming months.

The other part of the lifestyle equation is for the future but it includes a good diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables, and I won't mention smoking and alcohol.

Sporting Footnotes

By the way for the football fans Ryan Giggs puts his longevity as a footballer down to yoga that he started 6 years ago. For more information check www.timesonline.co.uk/ November 30 2008 life & Style

Gary Player will be 74 on November 1st and he hates missing his gym sessions and still broke 80 in this years Masters. He can still do a 1,000 sit-up session.



Medical Notes

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