

Skip yourself fit

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THE HEALTH BENEFITS obtained from a small amount of cardiovascular exercise each week are well established. Moderate to low intensity activities done as little as 30 minutes a day can bring benefits. Such activities include walking, gardening, housework, and stair-climbing.

More vigorous aerobic exercise such as running, swimming, cycling and skipping done for a minimum of 30 minutes at least three times a week are much more beneficial for improving the fitness of the heart and lungs. Studies show that this type of exercise will help reduce the risk of heart disease, lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

So why should you choose skipping over any other form of aerobic exercise? Skipping will, like other exercise improve your heart rate and blood pressure, promote fat loss, improve flexibility, coordination and balance and improve muscle tone particularly in the thighs, buttocks and calves.

It has also been stated that ten minutes of skipping has the same health benefits as a 45-minute hard run. An interesting thought for those of us with hectic lifestyles that use the excuse that we can't find time to exercise!

However, skipping may not be suitable for everyone. As it is a high-impact activity, avoid it if you have joint problems, established osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis or advanced osteoarthritis. If you already have heart disease or a family history of heart disease, as with all exercise you should check with your doctor before starting any new exercise regime.

Don't try too much too soon. Start at a work: rest ratio of at least 1:3 and build up slowly. Avoid hard concrete surfaces. Favour a springy wooden floor, carpeted surface or place a thin exercise mat down first (make sure this won't slip). Warm-up before skipping.

Do five minutes of gentle cardiovascular exercise, walking, marching and so on. Then gently stretch all the major muscle groups you'll be using. Remember to cool-down, that is, bring your heart rate down gently at the end of a session. Stretch again following your skipping session.

(Adapted from an article by Melanie Claire Betts – The British Rope Skipping Association)



PRIZE POSTER

THE WINNING POSTER in the Barbados Heart & Stroke Week poster competition, was created by eight-year-old Keila Worrell.

Team up for healthy hearts

by **OLIVIA ALLEYNE**
CHRIST CHURCH GIRLS

MOST PEOPLE, including my friends, believe that they have healthy hearts – even those who are overweight. This is not surprising as not many people want to admit that they are overweight, unfit, and possibly unhealthy.

The medical experts are constantly reminding us of the dangerous consequences of a prolonged unhealthy lifestyle. It seems as though these warnings are not working because more fastfood than ever before is being eaten by children and they are exercising less.

So, perhaps some other approach is needed. I therefore encouraged a few of my friends to team up with me for a two-week healthy heart lifestyle. I gave each a questionnaire to fill out as I wanted to see which foods they were eating and if they were exercising regularly.

Some evenings we met and had a great time bicycling, roller skating or skipping. When it was time to go home I reminded them to eat their fruits and vegetables and to omit the snacks. I promised each of them a prize before they teamed up with me. The prize: healthy hearts ... THEIRS!

My friends and I are young, so we still have time to develop a healthy lifestyle. Sadly, it may be too late for older citizens who are on medication for diabetes, strokes, heart attacks and high blood pressure.

I think the time has come for children to be educated about these diseases. In addition, I hope that they would



CEO of the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados, Adrian Randall, second left, and Vice-president, Employee Benefits, Guardian Life of the Caribbean, Deryck Murray, congratulating Barbados Heart & Stroke Week Poster Competition winner, Keila Worrell, left, and Essay Competition winner, ten-year-old Olivia Alleyne.

encourage their parents to buy more fruits and vegetables and fewer salty, sugary snacks. Children should also remind their parents to cook less fattening meals. However, parents cannot do it alone. They need other team players to team up with one another and campaign for the sale of healthier foods, fruits and vegetables at cheaper prices, and recreation areas with play equipment

where children can go to exercise.

Please team up and take care of my generation or we, too, will be a statistic in the World Health Organisation future reports on unhealthy hearts around the world.

– Olivia Alleyne is the winner of the Barbados Heart & Stroke Week Essay Competition for Primary Schools.

Dieting myths

– Part 2

AS WE SAW last month, there are many weight loss myths included in diet tips, so now we take a look at the next five most popular and see what we think of them.

6. Certain foods, such as grapefruits or celery, can burn fat

No foods can actually help you to burn fat. Some foods with caffeine may speed up your metabolism slightly for a short time but they won't cause significant weight loss.

7. Carbohydrates-rich foods such as bread and pasta, are fattening

It's calories that count, and gram for gram carbohydrate has less than half the calories of fat. But carbohydrate-rich foods can be fattening because of the fillings and toppings commonly added to them – such as creamy sauces on pasta and butter or cheese on baked potatoes.

Some carbohydrate foods, especially wholegrain versions, are packed full of fibre which can keep hunger at bay. For example, wholegrain pasta is more filling than white pasta and will keep you satisfied for longer.

8. You shouldn't snack between meals

Eating healthy snacks between meals can actually help you to control your appetite and keep your blood sugar level steady. Fruits and vegetables are a great choice.

9. Low fat means low calorie

Replacing fat with other ingredients can still result in a product with a high calorie content. Don't be fooled – check the label. Quantity is also important – you won't cut back on calories if you eat twice as much of a low fat product as a full fat one!

10. You have to exercise intensively to burn fat

Even low intensity exercise will burn fat. Walking, gardening or doing housework will help you to burn calories and lose weight.

(Our thanks to the British Heart Foundation for allowing us to reproduce this article from their newsletter.)