

Aerobic Exercise Helps Control Diabetes

Regular aerobic exercise is fast gaining recognition as an effective means of managing diabetes, according to The National Exercise For Life Institute.

For much of this century, the cornerstone of diabetes therapy was a diet that limits sugar and other fast-acting carbohydrates, plus oral medication for the less severe Type II diabetes, and insulin injections for Type I diabetes (which is more severe, and often begins during childhood).

Now, it is increasingly being recognized that aerobic exercise can be added to the diabetes therapy equation.

The benefits of aerobic exercise in helping to lose weight are especially important with the more common Type II diabetes. According to the November, 1988, issue of the *Mayo Clinic Nutrition Letter*, about 10 million Americans, more than 80 percent of whom are overweight, have Type II diabetes.

Exercise affects the body's need for insulin: insulin's main purpose is to regulate blood sugar by facilitating the transfer of glucose from the blood to cells in the brain and muscles, where it's used for energy. With diabetes, the body either produces an inadequate amount of the insulin hormone, or the body's tissues are somewhat insensitive to insulin's effects.

Without an adequate supply of insulin, glucose collects in the blood, leading to high blood sugar levels while the cells "starve."

"Exercise helps the body to better utilize insulin, so people don't need as much insulin to move glucose from the bloodstream into the cell," explained Emily Hsu, R.N., health coordinator at the Minneapolis Society for the Blind (MSB). Approximately 40 percent of the clients Hsu works with have lost all or part of their vision due to complications of diabetes.

Exercise also has many long-term cardiovascular benefits for people with diabetes. Each year, more than 125,000 people die of diabetes or associated heart and kidney complications. But through regular aerobic exercise, the heart's pumping action is improved.

In addition, exercise lowers blood pressure and total blood cholesterol. At the same time, exercise increases the protective, high-density lipoprotein (HDL) or "good" cholesterol. HDL slows the development of atherosclerosis (the fatty tissues that clog arteries) and thus reduces the risk of a heart attack.

Always Consult Your Physician

"Before starting an exercise program, talk with a doctor who is knowledgeable about diabetes and your condition," said Diane DeMarco, executive director of the National Exercise For Life Institute. Some complications of diabetes, especially those affecting the eyes, can be

worsened by exercises that jar the body.

"We don't recommend jumping, running or weight lifting to people with active eye complications," said Hsu. "Moderate biking, walking or cross-country skiing indoors is fine. Because of the dangers of falling, we don't recommend skiing outside at this stage," she added. She also warned against too-strenuous exercise for those with kidney complications.

"An in-home exercise machine like NordicTrack, which simulates the motions of cross-country skiing, is ideal. It's smooth and jarless, yet it offers an excellent cardiovascular workout," said DeMarco. Cross-country skiing is widely accepted as one of the most efficient forms of exercise.

That smooth, gliding action is also important since many people with diabetes have poor circulation and fragile blood vessels. "For example, jogging places potentially dangerous levels of stress on the heels and feet, which can lead to injury and poor healing," noted the above mentioned issue of the *Mayo Clinic Nutrition Letter*.

People with diabetes also need to protect themselves from hypoglycemia, or abnormally low blood sugar, which may happen during, shortly after or 10 to 12 hours post-exercise. Hsu advises monitoring blood glucose levels closely, and keeping fast-acting foods and liquids nearby. She also emphasized that people should not exercise if their blood glucose level is over 250 mg/dl.


"In-home exercise equipment is a good exercise option for those with diabetes, because they'll have ready access to the food and liquids they may need," added DeMarco.

The purpose of The National Exercise For Life Institute is to collect and disseminate information on the value of regular aerobic exercise, in order to convince more Americans to start and maintain a personal exercise program.

For more information on the benefits of regular aerobic exercise, call The National Exercise For Life Institute, 612/448-3094, or write Box 1, Chaska, MN 55318.

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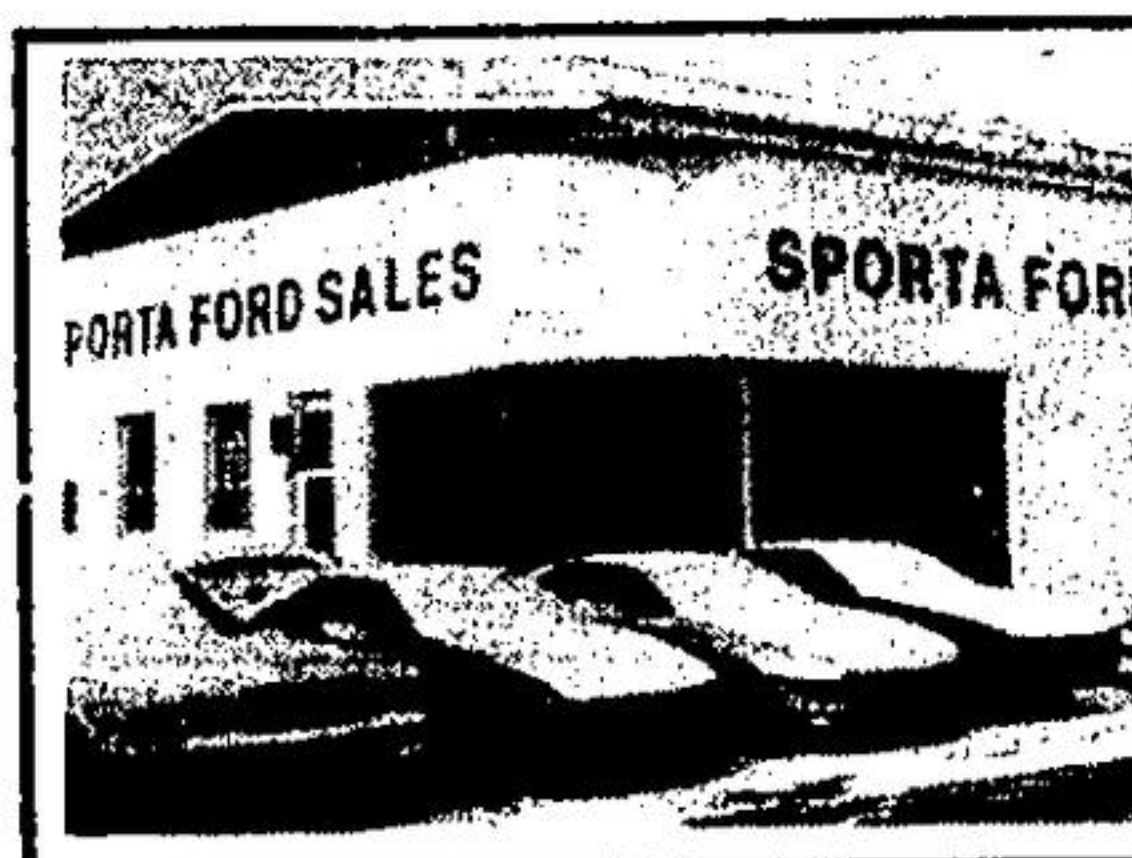
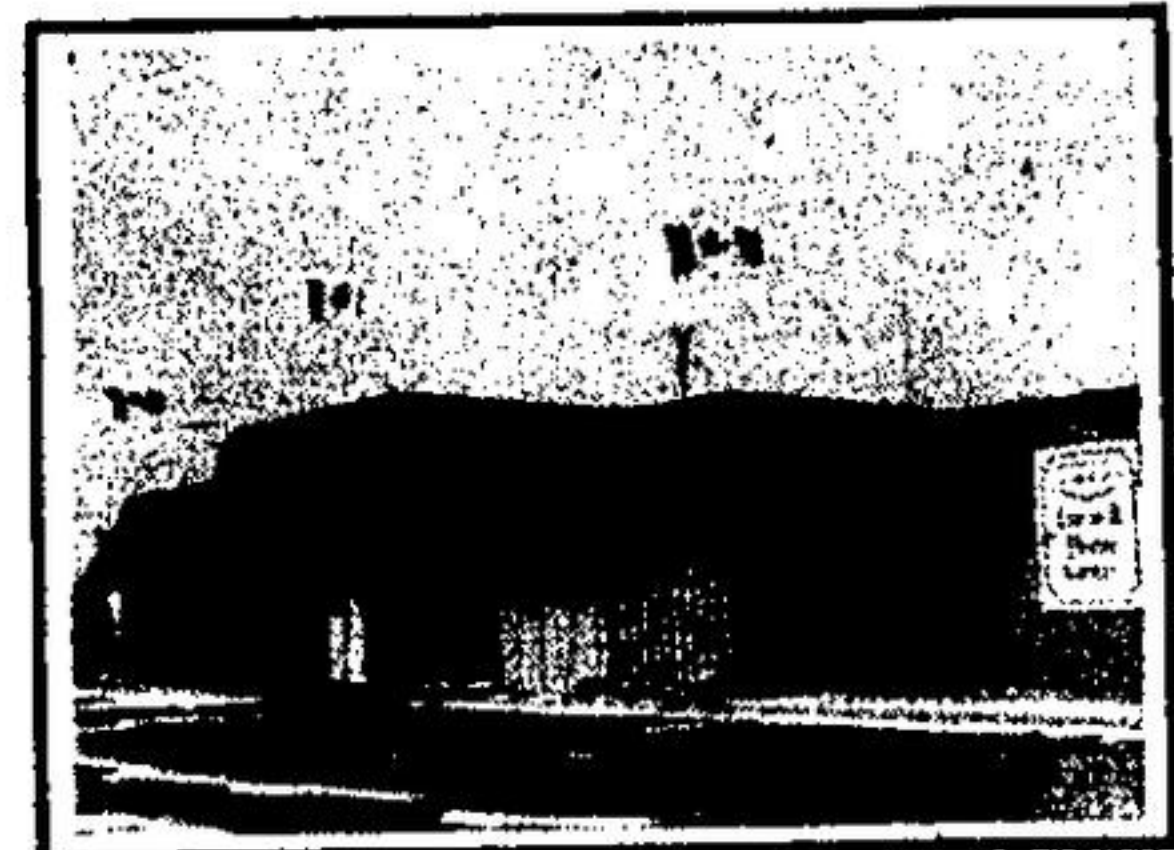
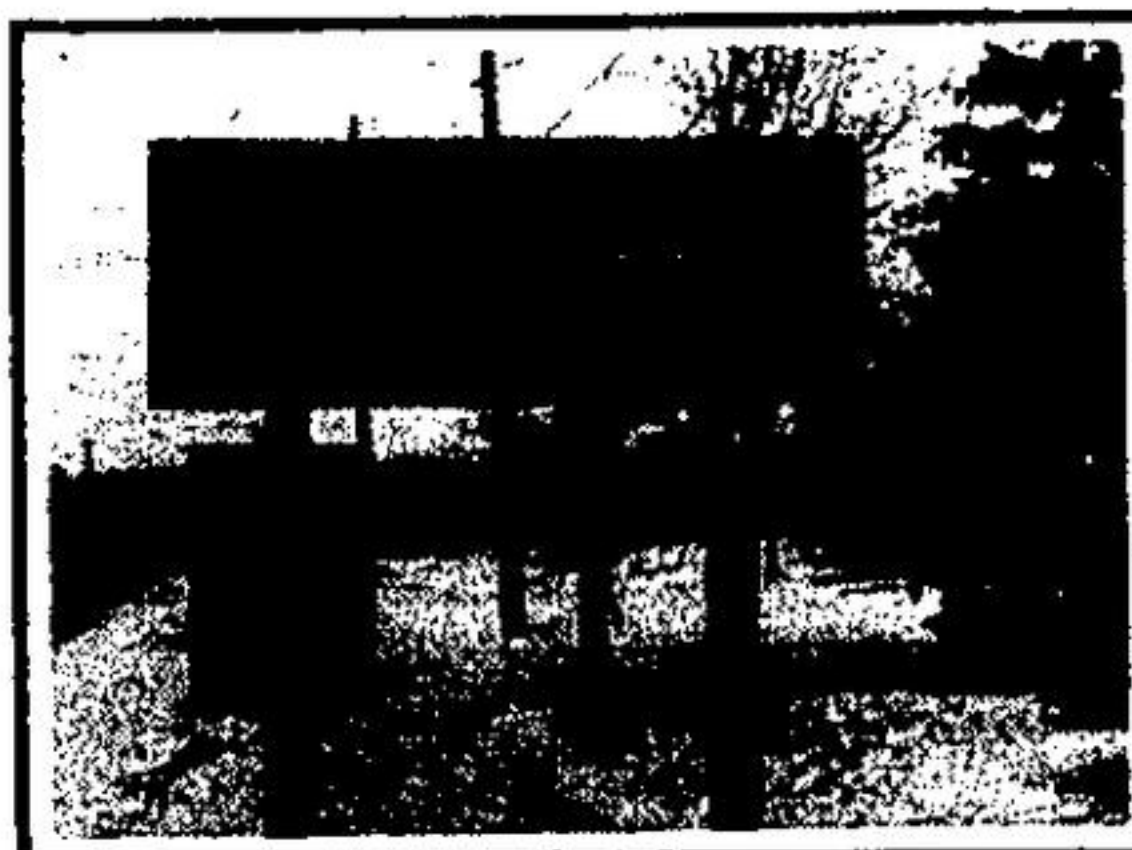
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Rebels open with style



Chuck Loreto makes the tag on a sliding Bishop Reding Royal at second base and pitcher Gord Burke rolls to an opening day 12-0 whitewashing of the Milton-based visitors on Monday at the Fairgrounds. Rebs visit White Oaks today. (Herald photo)

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