

Basic fitness can begin with walking

By **BETTY McTAGUE**

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Spring is around the corner and we all want to look our best for the summer when we shed some of our layers.

There is however more to health and fitness than just looking good. Feeling good about ourselves and our physical well being are equally important.

Some of us are carrying around some excess winter weight and there are those among us that have carried it a little longer.

To be at our best there a few basic things we need to look at.

What does fitness mean to you as an individual?

Personally it means daily exercise of approximately 10 minutes twice a day. i.e. Walking with a friend, cycling, stair climbing, dancing while dusting etc. This simple routine when practiced daily will increase your metabolic rate, improved cardiovascular strength, helping to think more clearly.

A well balanced low fat diet (Canada's Food Guide) will assist in shedding the extra pounds. Remember fruit and vegetables do not make us fat.

Beware. When the sun is shining and the smell of spring is urging us

to overuse, resist the temptation. The average person walks 70,000 miles in a lifetime, with 2,000 foot strikes each mile, resulting in numerous foot and ankle problems.

"Overuse conditions" relate to cumulative stresses and strains that occur at a rate faster than that of the healing response.

Plantar Fasciitis is a common cause of heel pain especially in sports and obesity. Pain is most severe in the morning when taking the first 50-100 steps and gradually decreasing for walking. Pain is aggravated by activity and the patial compensates by walking in a supinated, outside of foot, position.

Conservative management includes heel cushions and orthotic devices. Rest and aggressive heel cord and plantar fascia stretching and strengthening are important.

Shin Splints - pain along the front and inside lower 2/3 of the shin (tibial shaft). The term shin splint encompasses a variety of disorders where there is excessive external hip rotation to hypertension (flat foot) when in midstance the heel can be the contributing factor.

Conservative management is rest, ice, massage, heel cord stretching, heel pads, orthotic devices.

The return to exercise must be very slow. If pain develops you must then go back to the level where no pain is occurring.

Selection of shoes is important. Running shoes are made from a variety of materials and designs depending on intended use and the shape and flexibility of the foot. If there tends to be a more pronated (flat foot) then a shoe with a firmer

heel and medial counter and a custom made arch and forefoot supporting orthosis will help control the foot. The carus (high arch) foot is more rigid and requires more shock absorption and a material that provides forgiveness while unloading the metatarsal heads.

So don't go all out at once or you may be all out for the season. So let's walk downtown and get fit.

Do the Noonwalk! Step out for a snack, step out for a breath of air. And take a bite out of a long day.

Make your move.



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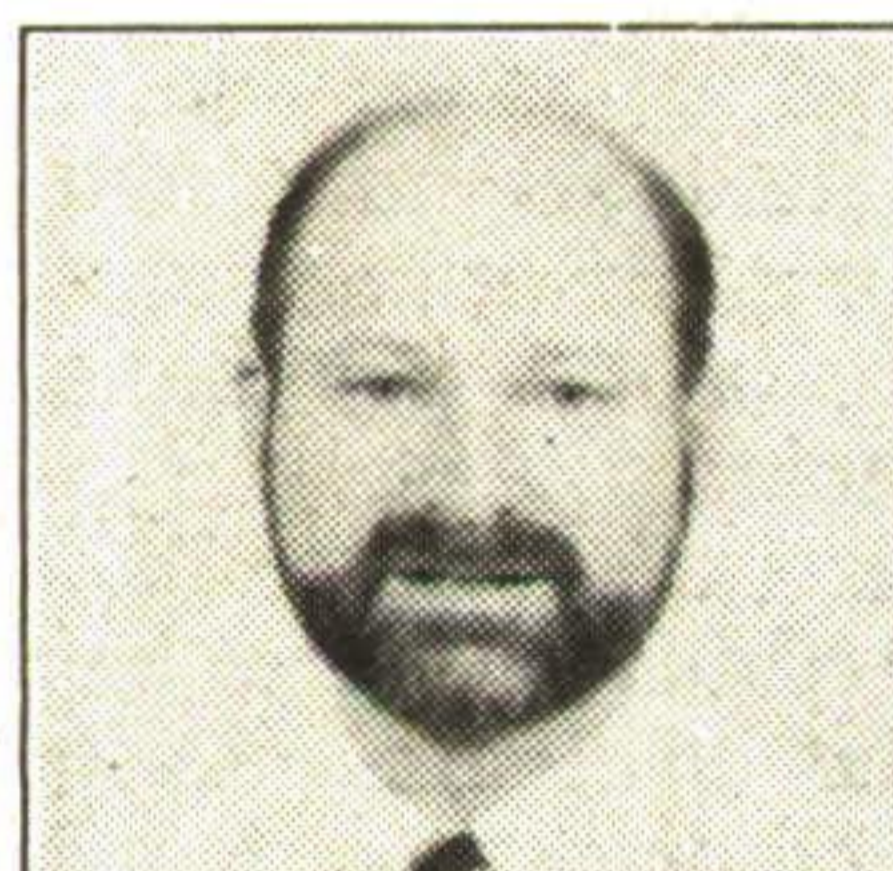
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