

Health & Fitness.....

Physical inactivity could lead to heart disease

Lack of exercise elevated to fourth major risk factor for heart disease and stroke

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada has elevated physical inactivity to the fourth major, modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular disease. A sedentary lifestyle is now considered as potentially damaging as smoking, high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure.

Scientists are now satisfied that regular physical activity can lower resting heart rates. It can lower blood pressure in some people who have high blood pressure. Regular activity can also lower low-density lipoproteins, the so-called "bad" cholesterol, while increasing high density lipoproteins, the "good" cholesterol. In addition, regular exercise can also help

people maintain a healthy body weight. Physically active people also tend to smoke less, eat healthier foods more often, and cope better with stress.

Heart disease and stroke are Canada's #1 killer. Cardiovascular disease accounts for over 75,000 deaths annually in Canada (about 40 per cent of all deaths). In Halton, between 1985 and 1990 41.2 per cent of all deaths were due to heart disease and stroke. That is more than the combined total of deaths due to cancer, AIDS and accidents.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, Halton Region and the Halton Regional Health Department recommend that:

1. People of all ages should be active on a daily basis.

Regular physical activity need not mean strenuous

exercise nor vigorous training. Activities such as walking, gardening, housework, golf and dancing, for example, can have long-term cardiovascular benefits.

2. Everyone should incorporate physical activity into their normal routine.

Active Living is a way of life in which physical activity is valued and integrated into daily life. Active Living should be encouraged from a very young age and should remain an ongoing, enjoyable part of life for all people in Canada. Active Living can help to establish and maintain a healthy personal fitness level. Active Living is a major contributor to improving health and well-being.

3. Schools should ensure that quality, daily physical activity is provided for all students.

Children and adolescents involved in daily physical activity gain far more than physical benefits. In addition to the cardiovascular advantages, benefits include social, emotional and psychological development. Early, regular exposure to physical activity can help ingrain active living

into the lifestyle patterns of our society.

4. Adequate care should be used when embarking on a fitness program of any kind.

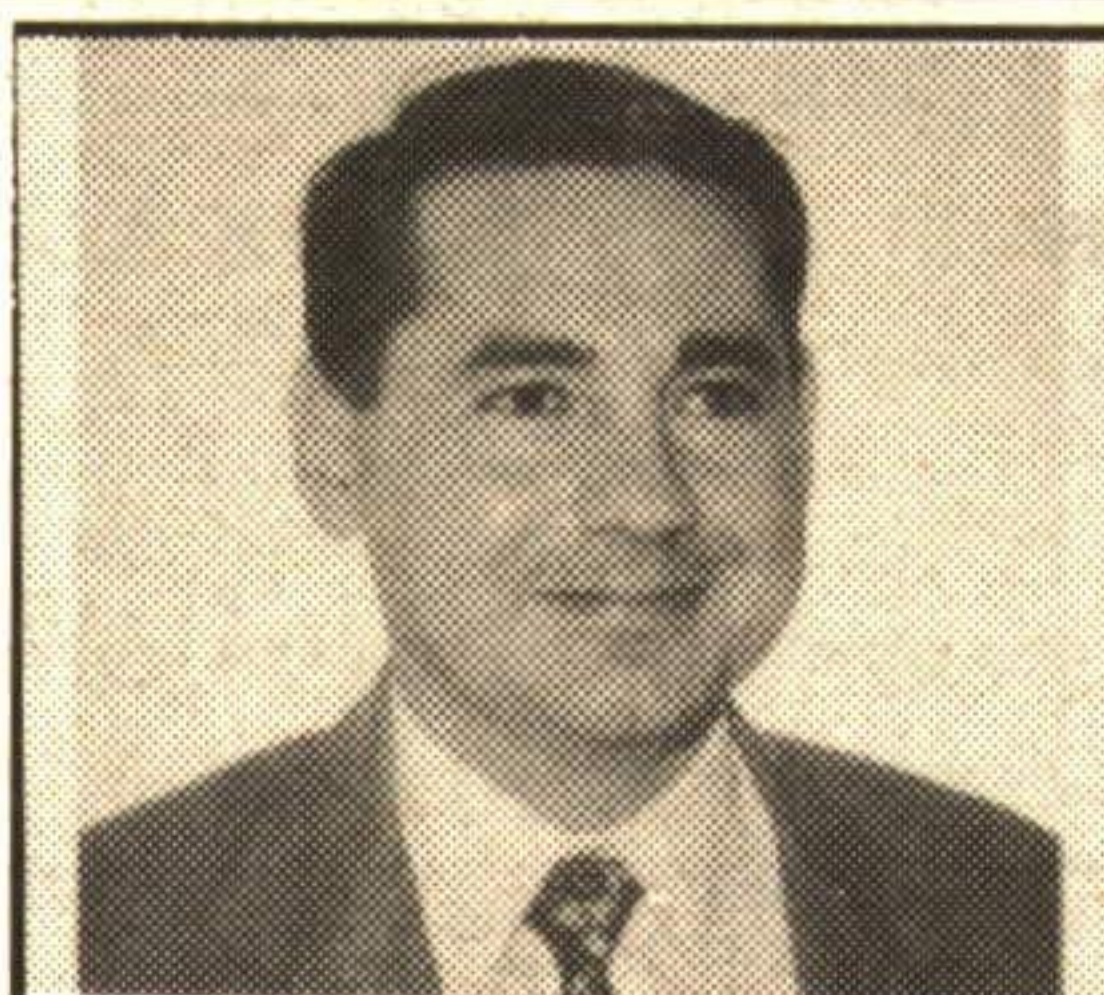
Seemingly healthy individuals shouldn't have to consult a doctor before undertaking light to moderate physical activity. However, people with low fitness levels or other known risk factors may wish to seek medical advice.

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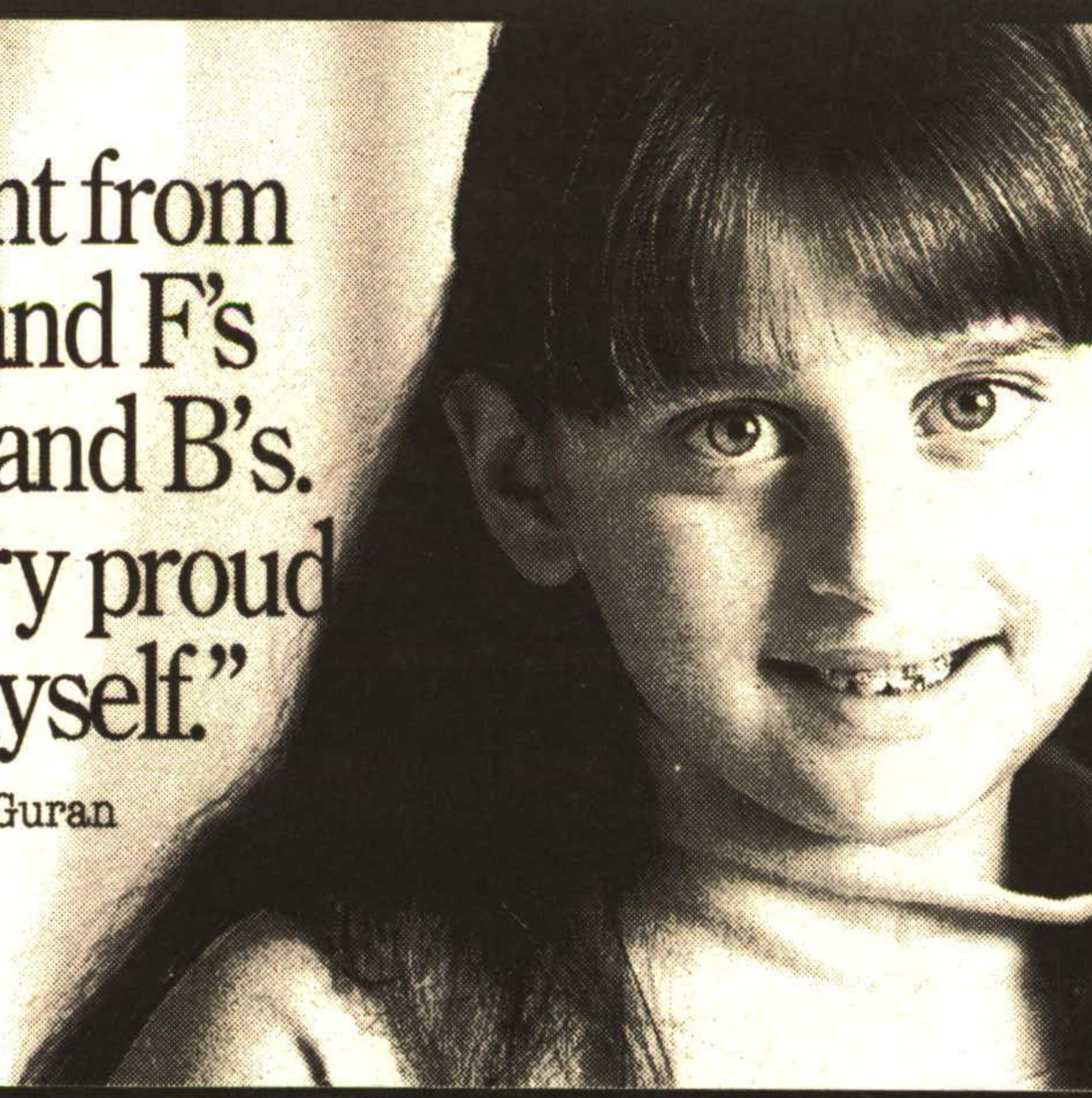
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