

Common Sense about Exercise

"It won't do you any good to exercise unless you do it until it hurts"—the saying goes. This is absolutely false. Although you may get some benefit from doing exercises until "it hurts", this is not necessary in order to acquire an adequate level of physical fitness. As a matter of fact, greater benefits can be derived from exercise by avoiding stiffness and soreness.

There are basically two ways in which you can avoid discomfort and still develop high levels of physical capacity:

*Warm up properly before participating in any strenuous physical activity such as sprinting, handball, tennis, etc.

*Start any training programme at a low level of activity and work up by easy stages.

Warming Up

The 5BX Plan was designed so that no additional warmup is necessary in order to receive its maximum benefits.

The older one is, the more necessary proper warming up becomes to avoid "strained" muscles. The 5BX Plan has a built-in method of warmup. This is achieved in two ways:

—by the arrangement of the exercises; and

—by the manner in which these exercises are performed.

For example the first exercise is a stretching and loosening exercise which limbers up the large muscles of the body. In addition, this exercise should be started very slowly and easily, with a gradual increase in speed and vigour.

Let us see how this principle applies to exercise No. 1, which requires you to touch the floor. You should not force yourself to do it on the first attempt, but rather start by pushing down very gently and slowly as far as you can without undue strain—then on each succeeding try push down a little harder, and, at the same time, do the exercise a little faster so that by the end of two minutes you are touching the floor and moving at the necessary speed. All the exercises can be performed in this manner.

If you choose to do the exercises in the morning, and are a slow-starter, as soon as the alarm rings, stretch, arch your back, lift your legs, and start riding your bicycle.

Weight Control—Exercise

When you are overweight, you have more fat stored up in your body than is necessary or good for you.

You become overweight and flabby when you eat more "high-calorie food" than your body can use. Foods such as fats, sugars, starches, etc., supply the energy your body needs for its work. If you eat more high-calorie foods than is required for your daily work the surplus is stored in the form of fat. Fat is stored under the skin and around the internal organs.

Everyone has, or should have some fat on his body. However excessive fat storage, particularly about vital organs, impairs physical efficiency and health. Fat makes the heart work harder since each extra pound of body fat requires about one quarter of a mile of blood vessels. It is obvious, therefore, that you cannot acquire the highest level of physical efficiency when you are overweight.

The accumulation of fat on your body can be prevented or reduced either by eating less high-calorie foods or increasing your physical activity. It is better still to combine these two by cutting down on high-calorie foods and increasing your physical activity by regular, frequent exercise.

