

# HEALTH Matters



## Keeping fit in summer

Summer is here. It's perfect to throw on your fitness gear and head outdoors to work up a good sweat. But what happens when exercise becomes the cause of ill health?

While exercising during summer, watch out for the bad effects that heat can have on your body!

### Effect of hot weather on your workout

Due to loss of fluids and increase in body temperature, exercising in the summer heat can add extra stress as your core body temperature increases. In order to cool itself, the body circulates more blood through the skin, leaving less blood for the muscles.

### Warning Signs:

- Headache
- Muscle cramps
- Dizziness
- Nausea / Vomiting
- Weakness
- Confusion
- Dehydration



If experiencing one or more of these symptoms, stop exercising, get out of the heat and consume ample fluids.

### How to keep fit and yet beat the heat?

You can workout outdoors in the summer, but with a few precautions.

- **Time yourself** - Early morning or late evening is the best time to exercise. Avoid exercising at midday.
- **Acclimatise yourself** - Give your body time to adapt to the heat, which usually takes one or two weeks.
- **Keep yourself hydrated** - Do not wait till you feel thirsty; ideally drink at least one or two glasses of water before you start your exercise.
- **Wear appropriate clothing** - Wear clothes that are loose fitting, lightweight, and made from breathable fabrics. Avoid dark-coloured clothes.
- **Avoid the sun** - Exercise in the shade, try and avoid direct exposure to the heat. Use sun screen lotion with an SPF 15 or higher.
- **Take breaks** - While exercising in the sun, as opposed to your regular exercise routine, try and take frequent breaks.
- **When to stop** - If you experience dizziness, nausea, or any other symptoms of heat-related illnesses, stop exercising immediately. Contact your doctor to seek medical aid.

So, go ahead and make the most of the summer! Enjoy the outdoors and keep fit, the safe way.

### Editor speak

Welcome to the May issue of Health Matters, offering the latest evidence-based information on wellness. The articles include:

- Tips on how to keep yourself fit and continue exercising during summer.
- Details of the causes, symptoms and management of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). An affliction that affects people even when they have had plenty of rest.
- Highlights on the functions of water, factors guiding the daily requirement of this precious life-giving resource and some interesting benefits.
- Creating awareness about the ill effects of secondhand smoke or passive smoke and striving to make our environment tobacco smoke-free, on May 31st which is celebrated as 'World No Tobacco Day' all over the world.





## Sick and tired of being tired

Imagine a day when walking up a flight of stairs feels like climbing the Himalayas or a simple walk in the park leaves one struggling for breath just like running a marathon would. The initial reaction to this would be to assume the body is just tired and needs some rest to rejuvenate completely. But even when one has rested and there is no respite, and further investigations show no possible cause, then why does the weariness continue? Why does the head always want to hit the pillow?

When a person is overwhelmed by fatigue and is experiencing physical or mental exhaustion even after a long peaceful rest, and if it persists for more than six months then it is probably Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). People affected by this syndrome find it extremely difficult to perform even regular day-to-day tasks with ease. Adults between the age group of 20-50 years, with average age at onset being 30 years, are prone to this syndrome. Studies have shown that it affects both men and women. But women are more than twice as likely to be affected by this syndrome as men.

Diagnosis often includes patient's history of symptoms, series of lab screening tests to rule out other causes of fatigue and persistent long-term fatigue. People diagnosed with CFS report that their symptoms began post an illness much like the flu; some say that their symptoms began spontaneously and gradually worsened.

**Various causes of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome:** Though extensive research is being conducted in this field, scientists have not yet found a definite cause for CFS. But there are multiple factors that could trigger this syndrome. Some of which are as follows:



**Symptoms:** The symptoms of this syndrome are similar to those of flu and other viral infections and include muscle ache, headaches, extreme fatigue and generalised malaise lasting for more than 24 hours. However, these symptoms of CFS last for over six months.

### Some of the other symptoms are:





- Disturbed sleep cycle, insomnia, and feeling tired even after a good night's rest
- Lack of concentration and forgetfulness
- Muscle pain
- Severe pain in joints without any signs of swelling or redness
- Constant headaches of varying pattern, intensity and type
- Frequent or recurring sore throat
- Dizziness or nausea
- Excessive palpitation in the absence of cardiac pathology
- Tender lymph nodes in the armpit and neck

CFS has no cure. However, doctors prescribe various medications to relieve the symptoms. It is always advisable for a patient with CFS to closely work with doctors for best results. And let a doctor know if there are any changes in health.

**Treatment:** Many doctors prescribe a combination of the following treatment:

- **Cognitive behavioural therapy** – mainly addresses dysfunctional emotions, maladaptive behaviours and cognitive process.
- **Healthy diet** – a patient with CFS should try to maintain a diet that provides adequate nourishment. A visit to a nutritionist or a doctor to address this concern is always beneficial.
- **Better sleep technique** – having a proper sleep routine greatly helps a patient with CFS. Caffeine, alcohol and nicotine intake should be limited and napping during the day should be avoided.
- **Better time management** – keep the level of daily activity to a minimum. Avoid over exertion, take short breaks and divide work throughout the week.
- **Reduce stress** – one should always learn to say no. Develop a daily plan to limit both physical and emotional stress to a minimum. Allocate some time to relax and take breaks.

**Alternative therapy:** Doctors also suggest alternative therapy for better results like the ones mentioned below:

	Massage therapy
	Deep breathing exercise
	Hypnosis
	Meditation
	Yoga or tai-chi
	Music relaxation technique
	Acupuncture
	Healthy diet

With timely care and treatment one can bid adieu to fatigue. So put a stop to being sick and tired of being tired. Carry on, feel lighter and begin to enjoy the simple pleasures of life!





## The super drink

*It is scorching hot outside, you have just come back from a long walk and all you want is a nice, cool drink of water. This natural liquid immediately quenches your thirst and refreshes you.*

### Water helps:

- Regulate body temperature
- Carry nutrients and oxygen to the cells
- Lubricate joints
- Moistens tissues in the eyes, mouth and nose
- Prevent constipation
- Flush out waste products to lessen the burden on kidneys and liver
- Dissolve nutrients and minerals making it easier to absorb them



### What happens when we don't drink enough water?

You are constantly losing water, be it through sweating, breathing, urine, bowel movements or exercise. Some common symptoms of dehydration are as follows:

- Dry and sticky mouth
- Thirst
- Sleep or tiredness
- Headache
- Decreased urine output
- Dry skin
- Dizziness
- Constipation
- Less or no tears while crying



### How much water should you drink every day?

The amount of water you consume per day depends on a lot of factors as listed below.

- **Exercise** – Any kind of activity or exercise that makes you sweat leads to a loss of fluids, and this loss needs to be replenished for the body to function properly. The duration, type of exercise, and the amount of sweat determine the additional quantities of fluid that you need to consume.
- **Environment** – When in hot or humid weather, you tend to sweat more and this requires an additional intake of fluid. During winter the heated indoor air causes the skin to lose moisture, which leads to dry skin - an indicator that you need to consume more fluids.
- **Illnesses or health conditions** – While suffering from fever, vomiting or diarrhoea, your body loses a lot of fluids. Certain medical conditions such as bladder infections or urinary tract stones may require an increased fluid intake.
- **Pregnancy or breast feeding** – For expectant or breast-feeding women it is important that they keep themselves well hydrated. While nursing, large amounts of fluids are used.

### Health benefits of drinking water:

- **Weight management** – Any diet, the first thing they tell you is to drink at least eight glasses of water every day. By keeping yourself well hydrated and choosing to drink water (no calories) instead of a beverage (contains calories) helps you immediately cut down on the number of calories consumed, thereby helping you lose weight.
- **Clears out the toxins** – Water acts as a natural cleansing agent and helps the body get rid of all toxins. It aids the kidneys in flushing out toxins from cells. Water also helps clear out the digestive tract, which in turn helps in normal bowel movement.
- **Energises your muscles** – The cells in your body contain a lot of fluids. When the balance of fluids and electrolytes is not maintained, these cells shrivel, resulting in muscle fatigue. When exercising, it is very important to drink more fluids, especially to replace the amount of fluid you lose through sweat.
- **Clearer, radiant skin** – The skin contains a lot of water. The moment you are dehydrated your skin begins to get drier and look dull. Just the simple habit of drinking adequate amounts of water makes your skin look healthier and get a natural glow.
- **Better sleep** – Water helps balance your hormones, muscles and joints, as well as energy levels. This helps you relax and feel more energised when you wake up in the morning.

Try to keep a small bottle of water handy always, be it in your bag, car or even on your work desk. This elixir has the power to grant better sleep, ensure proper relaxation, facilitate weight loss and contribute towards a clear, glowing skin.

With all these benefits, water is a super drink indeed!





## Are you really free from smoking?

The moment you see a person next to you smoking, you feel proud that you understand the dangers of smoking and thank God for not being a smoker. But, you do not have to be a smoker for smoking to harm you. Breathing in the smoke exhaled by a smoker close to you, known as secondhand smoke or passive smoke, can result in many health problems.

### Characteristics of Secondhand Smoke

- Sidestream smoke - smoke from the burning tip of a tobacco product
- Mainstream smoke - smoke exhaled by a smoker
- More than 7,000 chemicals, including hundreds that are toxic and about 70 that can cause cancer

Sidestream smoke has high concentrations of cancer-causing agents and has small particles which make their way into the lungs and other parts of the body easily. There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

### Common Exposure Sites

- Homes
- Workplaces
- Bars & Restaurants
- Casinos
- Private Vehicles



### Health Hazards of Secondhand Smoke

It affects both adults and children as listed below.

#### In Adults

- Increases lung cancer risk by 20–30%
- Increases heart disease risk by 25–30%
- Risk factor for breast cancer for younger, primarily premenopausal women
- Risk factor for nasal sinus cancer

#### In Children

- Ear infections
- More frequent and severe asthma attacks
- Respiratory symptoms (e.g., coughing, sneezing, shortness of breath)
- Respiratory infections (i.e., bronchitis, pneumonia)
- A greater risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)



### Preventive measures

The only way to fully protect nonsmokers from the hazards of secondhand smoke is to completely avoid it.

#### Some simple and useful measures are:

- No smoking policy at home; ask family members and guests to smoke outside.
- Don't allow smoking in your vehicle; stop for smoke breaks and ask the passenger to smoke outside the vehicle.
- Choose smoke-free care facilities for children and aging loved ones.
- Patronize restaurants and other businesses that enforce no-smoking policies.
- Sit as far away from the smoke as possible in public places.
- Encourage and offer support to your loved ones to stop smoking.



### Get Quizzed!

Rearrange the words to form meaningful words.

- 1 Y R E I T D H A D N O
- 2 S N M I I A N O
- 3 F T G A E I U
- 4 M A E R T S E D I S

E-mail your answers to: [healthmatters@vidalhealth.com](mailto:healthmatters@vidalhealth.com)