

# HEALTH Matters

Lifestyle



## In the pursuit of happiness

*Hobbes: "What do you think is the secret to happiness? Is it money, power, or fame?"*

*Calvin: "I'd choose money. Happiness is being famous for your financial ability to indulge in every kind of excess."*

*Hobbes: "I suppose that's \*one\* way to define it."*

*Calvin: "The part I think I'd like best is crushing people who get in my way."*

Aren't we all seeking happiness in some form or the other? It could be in giving a stray puppy a home, or like Calvin says, having lots of money. Happiness, as we know, is an emotional state. Some research studies also say that happiness is determined by an individual's genes. But Raj Raghunathan, as stated in his article 'The Four Attitudes of Happiness', believes that the mere existence of emotion or genetics does not determine happiness but it is the attitude towards life that can make a world of difference.

**Notice the change for yourself by following some simple steps.**

• **Select happiness over worry:** The first step towards happiness is to consciously choose it above all worries. Tom G Stevens, author of 'You Can Choose to Be Happy' opined that happiness should be the top goal for everybody.



• **Count your blessings:** When we start to appreciate and value positive thoughts and people around us, is when we can be truly happy.

• **Stay positive:** Now is the time to implement the old saying 'try and try again until you succeed'.

• **Compare no more:** When you compare yourself with others you either belittle yourself or begin an unhealthy competition. While comparison is a complete no-no, self-improvement is the path to happiness.

• **Learn to forgive:** When you nurture the emotion of hatred there is both physical and mental damage. Learning to let go and forgive can only lead to positive thoughts and attitudes.

• **Spirituality:** Practice spirituality - it teaches and connects you to a larger picture of life, to stay connected and be happy.

• **Take care of your body:** Your physical health is correlated to mental and emotional health. The moment you start caring for your body is when you will be happy.

Staying positive, being grateful and loving your body is a doorway to happiness. But it is also the combination of the right attitude and genes that enables you to step over the threshold of that doorway.

### Editor speak

Welcome to the June issue of Health Matters, which offers latest trends and information on wellness. This issue talks about the following.

The article 'In the pursuit of happiness' focuses on attitudes such as gratitude, optimism, forgiveness, spirituality, etc., which play a vital role in seeking and discovering happiness.

Have you ever heard of e-mail apnea? The article on e-mail apnea enlightens you on what it is, its causes and possible remedies.

Nordic walking! A skiing technique that can be practised throughout the year, in any region, on any hard surface, is a recommended way to convert plain old walking to a full-body exercise.

Did you know that up to 80% of strokes can be prevented by reducing the risk factors through lifestyle modifications and adopting healthy behaviour? Well, here you'll find out how.





After a relaxing and well-deserved long vacation at a serene beach, you are ready to take-on office work. While at work, your inbox indicates that you have 646 unread mails! And when the flood of mails spills onto your computer screen, it literally 'takes your breath away' causing e-mail apnea. So what is e-mail apnea? Why does it occur? And what are the possible remedies?

Linda Stone, a former researcher of Microsoft, realised that she would momentarily hold her breath or breathe shallowly, while skimming through her mails. After extensive research, she published an article about e-mail apnea (she was also the first to coin the term).

### The following is an excerpt from her article:

*I've just opened my e-mail and there's nothing out of the ordinary there. It's the usual daily flood of schedule, project, travel, information, and junk mail. Then I notice...I'm holding my breath.*

*As the e-mail spills onto my screen, as my mind races with thoughts of what I'll answer first, what can wait, who I should call, what should have been done two days ago; I've stopped the steady breathing I was doing only moments earlier in a morning meditation and now, I'm holding my breath. And here's the deal. You're probably holding your breath, too.*

This unconscious behaviour of shallow breathing is called e-mail apnea that leads to increased stress levels, change of attitude, and imbalance in emotional well-being. That's not all - we also tend to breathe through the mouth or hyperventilate while using smartphones or while in front of a screen (television and videogames) resulting in screen apnea.

As her search for answers continued, she learnt that nearly 80% of individuals subject themselves to e-mail apnea and the main culprit is the way we sit. That's right, when we check mails or use laptops and smartphones we often hunch forward making it impossible for our body to complete a healthy cycle of inhaling and exhaling.

In addition, anticipation is also a partner in crime as it sets-in while viewing television or texting to cause breathlessness. Another research study by Gloria J. Mark, Stephen Volda, and Armand V. Cardello further asserts that an overload of e-mail and poor e-mail management strategy could cause e-mail apnea.

Taking forward her pursuit for answers, Linda Stone interviewed a series of physicians, psychologists, cardiologists, neuro-scientists, and e-mail and smartphone users to ascertain the implications of shallow breathing and holding your breath, especially when it's frequent and recurring. She found startling results that it severely alters our bio-chemistry and causes other related problems such as these:

- Increase in stress-related diseases
- Imbalance of oxygen, carbon dioxide, and nitric oxide in our bodies. Nitric oxide plays a vital role in combating viral, bacteria, and parasitic infections as well as tumours
- Variation in nerve conduction that will elevate your heart rate and trigger the liver to discharge glucose and cholesterol into the bloodstream

Aforesaid research studies have found out ways to control e-mail apnea. All you need to do is follow the instructions below:

- Disconnect from e-mail connectivity for some time. This will help you relieve overload and experience lower levels of stress. The participants of the study claimed that they bonded with their colleagues better through face-to-face communication and telephonic conversation.
- Read e-mails in batches. A recent study conducted has proved that this could be effective. By doing so you not only learn to prioritise (as you eliminate mails after reading the subject head) but also manage time more effectively.
- Breathing exercises. Practicing breathing exercises such as Buteyko breathing, diaphragmatic breathing, and Andy Weil's breathing method along with certain martial arts and yoga techniques assist your body in better breathing process.

So, isn't it time that we started breathing right and not let fast-evolving wireless communication 'take our breath away'?





## Poles apart from walking

No, we don't have to walk on poles, or launch a skid down a snow-covered mountain or hill. And no, you don't even have to be Nordic! Nordic walking – basically walking with the assistance of poles – is a great exercise for the entire body. Here's Nordic walking in its entirety – what is it, who is it good for, which are the perfect poles to use, and how to walk all this talk.

A skiing technique that can be practised throughout the year, in any region, on any hard surface – this is Nordic walking in short. Nordic walking uses specific walking poles that assist the upper body and channel its strength to help the walker move forward faster. Today, it's a recommended way to convert plain old walking to a full-body exercise that's good for all!

### The starting point

Started in the Nordic country - Finland, in the early 20th century as a training exercise for cross-country skiers, Nordic walking became popular as an exercise for everybody in 1997.

For a while now cross-country skiing has been heralded as being one of the best body workouts to burn calories and to build cardio-vascular fitness without putting stress on the joints. The only catch, however, is that you'll need a snow-covered mountain or hill for cross-country skiing. But, now with the Nordic walking option, the benefits of cross-country skiing can be enjoyed any time of the year, anywhere in the world. And doing just that are more than ten million people around the world!

### Step by step, pole by pole

For Nordic walking, we'll need a pair of Nordic walking poles. When we plant these poles in the right angle, the poles take the stress and weight off the knees and lower body joints, thus helping us move faster. While walking the Nordic way, the movement is similar to that of ordinary walking and swinging of the arms from the shoulder with straight elbows is also something this activity has in common with ordinary walking.

### Be in pole position

**Nordic walking has numerous health benefits. It can:**

Reduce our risk of chronic illnesses, such as asthma, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, some cancers, and stroke

Reduce the stressful impact on joints

Strengthen our abdominal and back muscles

Burn up to 46 per cent more calories compared to ordinary walking

Release tension in the shoulders and the neck

Improve our walking style and posture

### Walk one, walk all

Nordic walking is suitable for people of all fitness levels and ages. It's a perfect form of exercise for those of us who haven't been regular with our exercising and want to get back to it or those of us who don't favour the routine gym activities. Even people with health concerns can incorporate this with gentle walks.

If an injury has prevented you from exercising, Nordic walking poles can provide support during rehabilitation. Friends and family can together get in all the walking action as well – Nordic walking is a great group activity! It doesn't matter whether you are 10 or 70 and if you are interested in trying something new – Nordic walking could be the thing right for you.

To properly experience the benefits of Nordic walking, it's recommended that you take some classes to learn the technique from a qualified instructor.

So go ahead! Get walking the Nordic way! All the benefits of cross-country skiing and ordinary walking are just a pair of poles away!





# Stroke – Can It Be Prevented?

## What is a stroke?

Stroke is a serious medical condition which occurs when the blood supply to a part of the brain is severely reduced ultimately resulting in death of brain cells. The good news is it can be treated and prevented. Early and prompt treatment of stroke is essential, because the sooner a person receives the treatment, the lesser its damages.

## Is it preventable?

It is very encouraging to know that up to 80% of strokes can be prevented by reducing the risk factors through lifestyle modifications and adopting healthy behaviour.

## Identifying the symptoms?

These are common symptoms or manifestations of stroke, which will help us in identifying stroke early and, in turn, treat early.

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg (especially on one side of the body)
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding speech
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden severe headache, which may be accompanied by vomiting and altered consciousness, with no known cause

## How can I modify the risk factors?

Many factors, either alone or in tandem, can increase the risk of stroke.

- **Controlling high blood pressure:** Risk begins to increase at blood pressure readings higher than 120/80 mm Hg. Exercising, managing stress and limiting the amount of sodium and alcohol you eat and drink will help to keep high blood pressure in check.
- **Quitting smoking:** Smoking raises the risk of stroke for both the smoker and nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke.
- **Controlling diabetes and lowering cholesterol:** Healthy diet and regular exercise may help in keeping their levels at normal range.
- **Maintaining a healthy weight:** Weight loss of as little as 4-5 kg may lower your blood pressure and improve your cholesterol levels.
- **Exercising regularly:** Exercise helps in many ways. It can lower your blood pressure, increase your level of HDL or good cholesterol, helps you lose weight, control diabetes and reduce stress, and improve the overall health of your blood vessels and heart.

Along with these lifestyle measures, follow your doctor's advice and take medications regularly to maintain normal glucose levels. Medications such as anti-platelets and anti-coagulants may be prescribed to you after assessing your risk for stroke.



## Quiz | Answer the questions based on the information provided in the newsletter.

1) One of the attitudes that results in unhealthy competition and belittles yourself.

M    I  N

2) The chemical in the body which plays a vital role in combating viral, bacteria and parasitic infections as well as tumours.

I   I  C   X   E

3) The poles used in Nordic walking take the stress and weight off a particular joint, thus helping us move faster.

N

4) One of the common and early symptoms of stroke experienced on the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.

M  N  S

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