

# Thompson, Wiley + Associates

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## **Don't go to the gym ... too often", says personal fitness trainer**

It's best to stay away from the gym ... at least three days a week, says Niki Aron, certified personal trainer.

"If you think of your body as a bridge, it needs to remain strong to take the load of everyday living. But if you subject it too many stresses, it will slowly weaken and could eventually collapse," she says.

It's not that Aron has too many clients, or that she's not committed to her work. She's a tournament-level squash player and trampolinist, and is the first to praise regular exercise as one of life's great enhancers.

"But research shows that over-exercising can be more damaging than not exercising at all," she says.

## **Making up for lost time can hurt**

As the population becomes more health conscious, more people are making up for lost time, with or without the advice of a personal trainer. Health Canada recommends that healthy people exercise three times a week to boost agility and strength, raising their heart rates to safe levels in order to burn calories and reduce cholesterol and stress.

## **Hooked on endorphins**

Because they are naturally produced within the body, endorphins are probably the best way to reach a natural high. Endorphins are polypeptides, which bind to the neuro-receptors in our brain to give relief from pain. They create an adrenalin rush and sense of well being, can be addictive and drive many people to push too hard. "This can result in muscle and joint injuries as well as heat exhaustion. Rather than boosting your energy, overdoing it will deplete you," says Aron.

## **Where do I start?**

Most people do not need to see a doctor before they start since a gradual, sensible exercise program will have minimal health risks. However, some people should seek medical advice. If you have had chest pains in the past month, are middle age or older and in poor physical condition, have high blood pressure, have had a heart attack, are overweight or taking medication, you are wise to consult your doctor.

Aron says, "A myth exists that exercise makes you tired, when in fact a sensible exercise program can help both young and old gain more from life. Moderation is the key."

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