

exercising options

Myrna Partrich

Exercise is a key to graceful aging

Dear Myrna: I have a problem with looking older than my age. I'm in my late 40s and do look about the age of 59. I dress sort of young, color my hair and try to make-up properly. I think I've always looked older than my age. My body looks at least about 60 years old. I must admit I'm ashamed. I don't have good posture or decent body tone. On top of everything, I think I've got arthritis. Will exercise really help or should I see a plastic surgeon? I'm worried about my future!

—Betty Jean

I must start by telling you that there is more to exercise than vanity. It starts with health. When you are in good shape and feeling healthy both mentally and physically, you feel young and beautiful. Of course, feeling young and beautiful might be just what you need. You sound a little down on yourself. Will exercise help to retard age? Absolutely!

There is no conclusive proof that exercise alone will help you to live longer, but it clearly can help you to age more slowly and more gracefully.

If your posture is poor, you might be losing flexibility. Loss of flexibility is a prominent example of aging. One of the easiest ways to detect flexibility problems is in one's posture. Stiff joints and muscles often can be "unleaded" through exercise and regain their full range of motion. I am a stickler on posture. I've seen many young people with poor posture look 10 to 15 years older than their age.

I see many people in their 40s who cannot move their arms overhead. This is because they have themselves into fixed patterns of movement in life and have neglected to use their shoulder joints to their fullest extent.

In the aging process, other joints that often become unnecessarily stiff are hips, elbows and knees. Regular exercise can combat this arthritis-like condition. Diseases like arthritis that cause limited motion in joints cannot be cured by exercise, but can be ameliorated. Exercise has a great impact on preventing some disabilities associated with arthritis and bursitis.

Addressing the problem of feeling a little depressed as you do sound, exercise will definitely help. Exercise seems to have a big effect on the function of the nervous system.

There have been studies made to prove the mind and body connection. Studies show that if you exercise, you stay mentally sharper as you age. Even the reaction time of mind delegating body does not decrease with age. Exercise reduces everyday stress and gives you a healthy, high mentality. Many psychologists and psychiatrists use exercise as a treatment to help depression.

If you have poor posture and maybe arthritis, exercise is very important for you. One of the biggest dangers for women as they get older is osteoporosis — the thinning of the bones that often leads to fractures or immobility in later years.

It has been proven that inactive women can begin losing bone mass as early as age 30. There is a steady drop of about one percent per year, which doubles after menopause. By age 70, some women have lost 1/3 to 1/2 of their bone mineral mass. According to latest studies, "if you stress bone, you make bone."

Bones are like muscles. If you use them, they get stronger and thicker. Your bones respond to physical activity at any age. In a recent medical study, women in their 80s who began exercise gained more than two percent bone mass while non-exercising women in a control group lost more than three percent.

Also, do not forget your calcium intake. There are machines to test bone mass easily. You might want to go to a Humatology (skeletal specialist) to check out your arthritis condition.

Tell me, if you dress young, color your hair and make-up properly, why don't you exercise? Feeling good about yourself is feeling healthy and beautiful inside and out.

Have I given you enough reasons to exercise?

(Myrna Partrich, co-owner of The Workout Company Inc. of Bloomfield Township, is happy to answer any questions readers may have regarding exercise. Please send your signed letters to: sports department, Myrna Partrich, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham, Mich. 48012.)

Injury can't slow Zunker

By C.J. Rieck
staff writer

The pain in his right foot was, for the moment, forgotten. The ache would reappear, but not now. The wide grin splitting Greg Zunker's face dulled that realization.

In a 44-0 victory, it is hard to pick out one play and say, "That was the difference." Yet, Zunker's third-quarter interception and 30-yard race to the end zone was as important as any in Wayne State's triumph over visiting Northwood Institute Saturday. Which is what left him smiling.

"I was getting back into my drop (throw) right to me," said the 6-foot, 225-pound senior inside linebacker from Rochester Hills. "I wasn't thinking of anything but getting into the end zone. That's all I thought about — if I had enough speed to get into the end zone."

ZUNKER PICKED off LaPorte's short pass in stride and cut toward the right sideline. Several Northmen pursued, but none could catch him before he plunged over the goal line.

His touchdown put the WSU rout in high gear. The Tartars led 14-0 before Zunker's TD, after it, they added three more touchdowns and shut down NI's option offense.

"I think it gave our defense some momentum," said Zunker of his interception. "(NI) is a strong second half team, they come back real well."

What made Zunker's play incredible wasn't the pickoff as much as the speed he showed racing those 30 yards. In WSU's season-opener against California (P.A.), he fractured a bone in his right foot.

THE INJURY wasn't immediately diagnosed, and Zunker made the trip to Dayton for game No. 2. He played 3 1/2 quarters before retiring to the sidelines with what he thought was "turf toe."

"It was fractured near the big toe," said Zunker. "I was out three weeks, then they put a metal brace in my shoe. It gives me a flat surface to run on."

The brace not only lessens the discomfort, but Zunker's speed as well. That, too, made it surprising that he was able to get into his pass coverage on a soggy, muddy field so quickly.

"I'm really better at the run, especially now with my foot," said Zunker. "I'm slower getting into my (pass coverage) drops. It's hard to start and stop (because of the injury)."

His foot won't heal completely before the end of the season. But a few more wins like Saturday's — which improved WSU to 3-4 — will help ease the pain a lot.

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