

Keeping Physically Healthy

By Maleeha Mansur, Hayes.

There is no doubt about the importance of physical health, not least to reduce the risk of developing various diseases. Keeping physically healthy is a means of enhancing one's emotional well being, confidence, longevity and of course, fighting off illness. But, is there a role for religion in guiding us about physical health?

As described by Chaudhry Muhammad Zafrulla Khan sahib, 'a beautiful body is a blessing from Allah (God) and the Holy Prophet of Islam (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to show his gratitude to Allah for giving him a beautiful and pleasing body. Whenever the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) saw his face in a mirror, he used to pray, "O Lord! Make my nature as pleasing as my body." It shows that in religious matters, the human body is not an inferior thing. Without the body, you cannot have a spiritual life. It is true that the body is like a container and the soul is what is placed in that container. The body is only like a husk and the soul is a kernel. If we carefully analyse, we can see that if you break any container then the contents will spill. The soul and the body are also associated in this way and any damage to the body will affect the soul. According to the commandment of Allah the Almighty, whilst it is important to take care of your soul, it is equally important to look after your body. According to Islam, if a person deliberately adopts a lifestyle which results in his death, then he is a murderer and

guilty of his own murder."ⁱ

Physical health constitutes two predominant parts, diet and exercise.

For one's diet, most people have come across the concept of the healthy diet plate as a guide for the proportion of fruit, vegetables, protein, dairy and carbohydrates we should be consuming. However, recent guidance has shifted to the importance also of quantity. An intuitive means of measuring proportions based on one's hands has recently been proposed by the British Nutrition Foundation. The Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), has so beautifully addressed this with great clarity 1400 years ago. He said, "no man fills a vessel worse than his stomach. A few mouthfuls that would suffice to keep his back upright are enough for a man, but if he must eat more, then he should fill one-third with food, one-third with drink and leave one-third for easy breathing."ⁱⁱ

As women, when it come to a healthy diet, we have a crucial role. Not only do we decide the type of food our families eat, but the food tendencies and habits that we instil in our children will be with them for life. Thus, we hold a heavy responsibility in shaping the health of our future generations.

As for exercise, most people have had run-ins with some sort of gym membership, but mostly to temporary effect. With the example of the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) Islam has presented a beautiful model of how to incorporate exercise into one's life sustainably. Firstly, with the five daily prayers, Muslims go through various postures giving effective physical exercise to many muscle groups. Secondly, from the

example of the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), we know that he 'used to work with his own hands and this was the practice of his companions as well.'ⁱⁱⁱ This habit distances ones from laziness, making one alert and in the habit of hard work. Thirdly, we often hear that walking is the best exercise, in this regard, a companion of the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) related that 'I have never seen anyone walk faster than the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It seemed as if the earth was folding underneath him. We would become tired when walking with him,

but there would be no signs of fatigue on him. He did not walk with his head held high, and he would keep his gaze low.'^{iv}

Within the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, a whole department is committed to looking after the physical health and well being of members. The community holds regular charity challenge marathons enabling us to raise funds for local charitable causes whilst maintaining our physical health. Islam truly is a universal religion that, not only caters for religious needs but provides guidance on every aspect of the life and society.

REFERENCES

- i Steps to Exercise by Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh), page 12
- ii Tirmidhī
- iii Steps to Exercise by Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh), page 12
Steps to Exercise by Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh), page 32
- iv Shuma'ile Tirmadhi Babma ja' fi Mashiyate Rasullullahsa, Muhammadsa the Perfect Man by Hafiz Muzaffar Ahmad, page 17