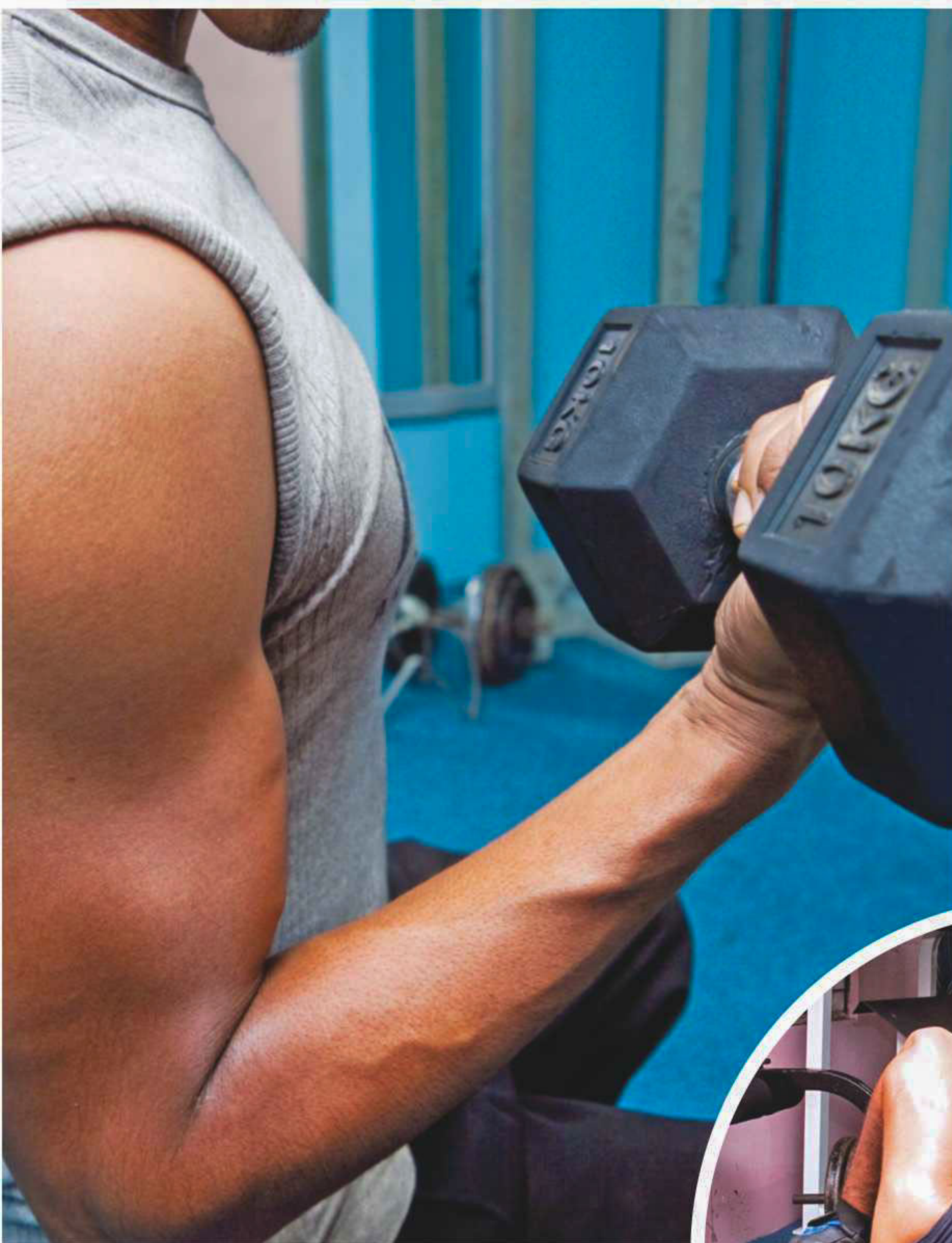


Living easy, living healthy



It is extremely difficult as a Bengali to live healthy. It seems as though everything is working against you. Whenever you are invited to a 'dawaat' at some relative's house, your plate seems to magically fill up with all sorts of delicious food, banishing all thoughts of your diet away. If you refuse, it is considered rude and it is sometimes quite challenging to refuse food and still be considered good company.

When it comes to exercising, be it going to the gym or even something as simple as going for a late afternoon walk, it seems everything is set against you. The heat, the dust, the mosquitoes and the traffic all team up like an unholy assemblage of Avengers to stop you from losing that stubborn belly fat.

Yet, we all know how important exercise is. Study after study has shown how physi-

cal exercise can lead to greater emotional and physical well-being, as well as letting you finally get the body you have always dreamed of.

An active lifestyle has been linked to reduced incidences of cancer, arthritis, lower risk of type 2 diabetes as well as reduced stress, enhanced creativity and much more.

The human body is not meant for a sedentary lifestyle – without proper exercise, the muscles which support us begin to weaken and we can see our bodies become covered in a layer of fat. Under the surface though, is where the real damage occurs.

Without proper exercise, our hearts become weaker and more inefficient. Due to the fats present in our diets, the interior walls of the blood vessels of our heart become narrow. Our ability to metabolise the food that we eat becomes more and more inefficient. Our bodies develop chronic aches and pains, which as the years go by, significantly reduce the quality of life that each of us can have.

While it is difficult to begin a healthy lifestyle, it is by no means impossible. According to experts, the key to living healthy is two pronged – good diet and exercise.

A good diet comprises balance. There are six main components to food and more often than not, we skip the vegetables and go straight for the rice and the meat. This is hazardous as excessive amounts of carbohydrates in our diet can lead to complications.

In terms of diet, another major overlooked component is that of liquids. Too often we see people who subsist on colas or tea and coffee, unknowing of their potentially harmful effects. According to nutritionists, it is imperative for each adult to drink lots of water. Water provides

significant benefits to the body as well as helping to flush toxins away.

We talked to nutritionist Farzan

a Sony from LabAid Hospital, on why people are becoming more health conscious now. She said "Nowadays

people come to me in a state of panic. They get to know that they are at risk of diabetes and certain types of heart disease and they become extremely fearful. What is sad is that, by the time they have become sick, it is harder for them to become healthier and control their weight. That is why for anyone, prevention is better than the cure."

"It is important to develop a healthy lifestyle when you are young so that you can get the benefits as you get older. For my patients, I check their BMI and give them diet charts. In our society, it is difficult for people to know which food is healthy and which food is not. I also prescribe that people become more and more active."

The second and arguably more important part of a healthy lifestyle is exercise.

When we think of exercise, we think of the gym. If time and money allows, then going to the gym is likely the best alternative for you. Yet more and more people nowadays are taking alternative paths to fitness.

Walking is a fantastic way to keep oneself fit. Experts say that walking reduces heart disease, lowers risk of dementia, strengthens muscles as well as acts to combat depression and stress. The best part about it is that you need no equipment to do so. As a low impact activity, walking can help anyone living a hectic life to feel much better about themselves and they say daily walking can add seven years to your life.

Cycling is another great cardio activity, which has become quite the passion. Cycling is a more intense workout than walking and you will be burning more calories if you cycle than if you walk. Cycling also has more utility – you can cycle to work, to meet friends or even just for fun and get fit in the process.

Yoga is also becoming popular recently. It is a great way of relieving oneself of stress and muscle pain. It relaxes the body as well as making it flexible and reduces stress, anxiety and mental frustrations. When done regularly, amazing effects are seen – it increases blood flow, drops blood pressure, protects the spine, helps to sleep better, gives inner strength, keeps allergies away and relaxes your system. Yoga not only makes one physically fit, but also makes one more focused and happier.

Whenever one is willing to adopt a healthier lifestyle, the most important rule to mention is to start slow. When you begin exercising, you will not enjoy it. So it is important to start small so that it does not become that much of a burden. If you want to start walking, take a five minute walk everyday for a week or two. Once the habit becomes ingrained, then you can increase the length of the walk and its intensity. This applies for any change in your life.

Start small and then when it becomes part of who you are, increase the intensity. Here's to healthier living for all.

By Mormee Mahtab

Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed