

wellness

YOGA

Increases flexibility

SANDHYA GUPTA

Uttanasana

Method:

Stand straight, inhale and raise your arms overhead. Exhale and bend at the hips, take the arms forward and down till you are in a position to touch the floor. Make sure you bend from the hips, and not from the back. Bring the fingertips in line with the toes and press the palms flat. You can either hold your ankle or put your hands on the floor.

Engage the quadriceps muscles of the thighs. The more you use your quads, the more the hamstrings (the muscles at the back of the thighs) will open up.



Bring your weight a little bit forward into the ball of your feet so that your hips stay over the ankles. Let your head hang. Repeat the same process for five times. On your last bend, remain in the same position for at least seven-eight breaths.

To come back from the pose, twist upward as if pulling yourself up one vertebra at a time, piling one on the other and leaving the head hanging down till the end.

Benefits:

Increases the flexibility of the hamstrings and lower back; stretches the legs and spine; relaxes the heart and neck; calms the mind and body.

CALORIE COUNT

For Ganesha

One fried modak packs in 224 calories! Now, if you love the Elephant-God, you will also share his fondness for sweets. And come Ganesha Chaturthi, and no festivities are complete without the sweet dumpling called modak. The health-conscious make them with rice paste and steam them, while others deep fry. Can you really say no to a second helping of these delicious modaks? If you cannot, do include an hour of gardening, or walk briskly for 45 minutes the next day, or do a 30-minute session of aerobics.



MCT

RUN for HEALTH

For a free spirited approach to fitness, try running.

BY RASHMI RAO

BENGALURU

Picture yourself running with the wind in your hair, free-spirited like a horse amidst the open greenery around you. Does it make you happy? Then, without a doubt, you are among the fitness enthusiasts who enjoy a run outdoors.

Visit any park in your city in the mornings and you will see a host of people going through their paces. Some slow jog, while others run a few rounds around the jogging track. Still others run and run... till their tees are soaking in sweat but they are in no mood to stop. It's a joy to see people running to keep fit, as it somehow conveys a sense of freedom.

And it is this thought which inspired Sabine Tietge, a German national in Bengaluru to start the group Runner GirlsIndia, to allow women of all ages to come together simply to run to their heart's content without fear of being jeered at or having a pass



Sabine

made at them early in the morning!

Sabine believes the benefits of running are many — it acts as a stress buster, improves sleep habits, controls weight and helps burn calories, helps lower BP and betters blood cholesterol, your heart becomes a more efficient pump, improves self-esteem and improves bone density, among others. "Latest research even indicates that if you have been a runner before pregnancy, you are advised to continue so long as the pregnancy is complication-free," she says.

International athlete Reeth Abraham says, "The best thing about running is that you can start at any age. But check with your physician before you start. Begin with a comfortable 30-minute walk for 15 days. Then, graduate to a brisk walk, then walk-jog and later start running. I won't say only running helps. By all means, go to a gym, but use the opportunity for strength training. That will help you tone up your body and weight training is especially recommended for women over 35."

Yet another international sprinter from Bengaluru Mohammed Muddassir is of the opinion that running is the basis for any sport. "Running helps build endurance, without which you cannot be competent for any sport. And endurance is the core of fitness. Running / jogging involves the entire body. It improves blood circulation and muscles are relaxed when compared to a gym workout where muscles can be strained. The important thing is to run slow. People can run



Muddassir

regardless of their age, but they should feel strong. Avoid running if you have a knee problem or if your shin bone is weak. People with these contraindications should not run even on treadmills," he says.

Sabine, who concurs with this opinion, however adds that for those who are fit enough to run, a recent study gives them top surfaces for running which include grass (which is really the best surface), woodland trails, bare earth, synthetic tracks, treadmill, sand, concrete and snow. "The only really important piece of equipment is a pair of running shoes suited to foot type, stride and body type. A gait analysis at a hospital or sports store will help select the right shoe," she adds.

The other thing to bear in mind while running is breathing. Says Sabine, "Always listen to your body. If you feel you are taking short, shallow breaths, you are going too fast and you should slow down or walk until you get your breathing back under control." However, Reeth says, "I am often asked tips on breathing while running. There's nothing different here — just breathe normally."

Now all you need to do is get set, and run!