

RECALL TO YOU
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HEAL cover story



Dr Ahmad Taufik in 2007, at a golf course. He was overweight with a BMI of 31.



Group members of SKKGF fitness group live in various places in the country and meet for road and trail races. Here, they are at the Sultan Mahmud Bridge Run in Kuala Terengganu.

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AHMAD SHUKRI MOHD SAAD

BATTLE HYPERTENSION WITH EXERCISE

Having controlled his hypertension, a doctor tells **Syida Lizta Amirul Ihsan** about the importance of exercise and how having workout friends is the best motivator

WHEN it comes to promoting exercise as a prescription for hypertension, Dr Ahmad Taufik Jamil, 46, is living proof of its benefits.

Diagnosed with hypertension at age 38, the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Medical Centre consultant public health and exercise physician's blood pressure hit 142/93.

His Body Mass Index was 31, classifying him as obese. He was at pre-diabetic stage with elevated blood sugar levels and with a strong family history of hypertension and heart disease.

He knew that he could manage his condition with medication but he decided to take the other route by overhauling his lifestyle and reversing his existing medical conditions.

So he bought a mountain bike. Every day after work, he would drive to Putrajaya and cycle for an hour. It was a commitment he stubbornly stuck to for two years.

At the end of this, his blood pressure returned to normal at 110/70 and his BMI went down to 26. His blood glucose level too has improved.

By 2011, he participated in duathlons and a year later, triathlons. In 2013, he started joining road and trail races. Today, he tells me he has gone on to bike, run and swim, among others.

"My schoolmates and I (Kole) Islam



"I started exercising when I was sick. Everyone should exercise while they are still healthy."

Dr Ahmad Taufik Jamil

Klang class of 1987) have formed a fitness group. There are about 20 of us scattered all over the country. We train separately but we meet up at events," he says.

"Last month, we climbed Broga Hill in Semenyih (in preparation for a Mt Kinabalu climb next year) and we took part in the Sultan Mahmud Bridge Run in Kuala Terengganu."

His office in the UKMMC's Pre-Clinical building shows signs of an avid exerciser. An impressive collection of running medals hang on one side of the wall, and a blood pressure monitor and weighing scale are within sight. On his wrist is a Garmin Fenix 3 sports watch.

He is determined to get people to exercise, especially those who are diagnosed with hypertension. "Don't be like me. I started exercising when I was sick. Everyone should exercise while they are still healthy."

PRESCRIBING EXERCISE

Dr Ahmad Taufik will start an exercise prescription clinic in Bandar Seri Permaisuri, Cheras, by the end of the year. Run by UKMMC, the clinic will prescribe patients, based on their risk assessment, the kind of exercises suitable for them and the intensity in which those exercises should be done.

"It's very important to have a risk assessment done, especially if you are over 35, and furthermore, if you have

existing medical conditions.

This will allow doctors to match the exercises and intensity according to what your body can handle," he says.

"If you fall under the high risk factor category, for example, high intensity exercises are not suitable for you, low intensity ones are more suitable.

"Large-scale studies indicate that regular physical exercise prevents hypertension and lowers blood pressure. Systematic reviews have also shown that physical exercise has a positive effect on those with normal and high blood pressure."

He says the hardest battle is maintenance. "No one likes to exercise. In my practice, for every 10 patients to whom I prescribe exercise, only one or two persevere and continue with the programme," he says.

"Exercise consumes time. How do you make it work in the long run? That's the question you need to ask yourself. Find a schedule that you can comfortably sustain so you don't give up."

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommend 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week. While the 150-minute requirement can be achieved in one sitting, Dr Ahmad Taufik says it's best to spread it over three to five days a week.

"Exercise often. When it comes to health, consistency is key," he says.

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