

Struggling to get back on track

Many M'sians finding it difficult to restart active lifestyle post-MCO

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PETALING JAYA: He had been keeping fit, going to the gym regularly.

Then the pandemic happened.

"After the MCO, I was excited to get back to the gym but then I was down with Covid-19. That was when everything started to go downhill for me," said a 34-year-old corporate executive who only wanted to be known as Manny.

"I became very cautious as I have breathing issues."

As for student I. Iylia, she has not been able to get back to her exercise routine since the pandemic struck, more so after she was infected herself.

Despite being a sporty person since her primary school days, Iylia has not gone out for a jog even after

Covid-19 restrictions were eased.

"When the number of cases were high and we couldn't go out, I started to lose motivation. After a while, I just stopped exercising," she said.

These are not isolated cases, as many Malaysians are finding it hard to get back to their pre-Covid-19 routines.

Centre of Dietetics, Faculty of Health Sciences, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) director Assoc Prof Dr Norazmir Md Nor said that complacency could happen, more so because of distractions from the wide usage of gadgets and social media.

"Even I myself find it very hard to get back to my active lifestyle since the MCO. Previously, I would be outdoors, going for mountain climbing, hiking and jogging, but now I guess we are getting complacent.

"Even my friends, other health

sciences lecturers and doctors are struggling to get back to their normal routine," he said.

Dr Norazmir said Malaysians, however, need to restart their healthy lifestyle or the country could maintain its position as the most obese nation in South-East Asia.

To start off, he said that self-awareness was most important, adding that people should look for support groups to help them find the motivation to restart their healthy lifestyle.

"We need to surround ourselves with those who exercise or workout because it is difficult to do it on our own unless we have health conditions that force us to do so," he added.

Dr Norazmir said family support was also important.

"Sometimes when I am not motivated, my wife will ask me to join

her for a jog or at least go for a brisk walk," he said.

He said Malaysians should exercise at least three times a week, 20 minutes each session.

The past two years of living amid Covid-19 restrictions has also impacted people's food intake.

"It seems like we are taking 'revenge' after two years of not being able to go out. Now we eat everything, especially during the festive period.

"During weekends, food stalls are packed. We need to be moderate in our intake, we may think that we are healthy but we have no idea about our heart condition," he said.

Deputy dean of Universiti Putra Malaysia's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Assoc Prof Dr Barakatun Nisak Mohd Yusof suggested using trackers and having a structured goal.

"Start reinstalling whatever apps to track your activity and calorie intake.

"We also need to have a goal. Try to achieve at least 8,000 steps at first and then 10,000, if you can," she said.

She said a person could achieve 2,000 steps in 10 minutes.

Dr Barakatun said healthy eating should also be a habit.

"We cannot eat healthy only every once in a while, it should be a routine.

"Those with health conditions or at high risk should also go for medical check-ups. We saw during the pandemic where we saw those with chronic diseases were the ones who were most affected," she said.

Those aged 40 and above should consistently do medical check-ups as they need to know their health status, she added.