



## SHORTCUT ADONIS

By Ankit Ajmera, Mumbai Mirror | Updated: Aug 9, 2013, 12.10 PM IST



Whiling away your time through the year, and cramming two days before an exam may not take you far. That's a lesson we learnt early at school. Strangely, adults are making the same mistake all over again, except this time, it's at the gym. The 'weekend warrior' syndrome refers to leading a sedentary lifestyle through the week, and hitting the gym with a vengeance over weekends. Until three years ago, Rajneesh Sharma, a 42 year-old textile dealer from Powai, was committed to an exercise routine, but a 12-hour work day meant he'd make time for it only on weekends. To compensate for the inactivity on weekdays, and in hope of burning calories earned through pav bhaji and beef burgers, he'd make sure the weekend session at the gym was nothing short of intensive.

However, since his body was not used to working out regularly, Sharma sustained repeated injuries — first, a shoulder tendonitis, then a knee injury and finally stiffness in the neck.

**ARE YOU ONE, TOO?** A weekend warrior like Sharma is at risk of sustaining a host of injuries including muscular rupture, skeletal fractures, dislocated joints and in extreme cases, a heart attack. In Sharma's case, he'd train for 2.5 hours a day on weekends, doing exercise sets that covered all parts of his body, from forearms to glutes.

"Long working hours make you lazy. I couldn't make the time for exercise, Monday to Friday," he admits. On hitting the gym, he would head straight for the heavy weights, without doing the crucial warm up first. A 10-minute warm up (walking/ jogging) is essential before exercising, as it helps increase blood circulation gradually. It's akin to oiling a rusty vehicle. Your heart rate increases gradually and your muscles warm up to prevent injury. Your ligaments and tendons become more flexible, reducing the chance of tears.

Sharma's first injury occurred when he was in the middle of shoulder raises using 30-kilo weights. "I should have stuck to 10 kilos," says Sharma, who suffered tendonitis (inflammation) in the right rotator cuff — muscles and tendons that connect the upper arm bone to the shoulder blade.

The following week, when he could not carry his laptop bag on his shoulder, he took a painkiller and continued with the workout the following weekend. Over few more weekends, when the pain worsened, he suffered his second injury. The patella (kneecap) on his left leg maltracked.

"I wasn't doing lunges the right way and I felt a sudden pain in my left knee. I couldn't bend it, stand up easily or walk down the stairs," he says. Sharma's metabolism was affected too. With long gaps between physical activity and unhealthy meals, his blood sugar levels fluctuated, disrupting his metabolism. "It was frustrating. I was storing more fat than I was burning," he says, adding that he weighed 96 kilos at the time.

#### WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

Dr Poonam Bajaj, a physiotherapist whom Sharma consulted says, intense weekend-only workouts are worse than no exercise. "It's like packing in four meals just at dinner time. A vigorous workout on the weekend does the same thing to your muscles that overeating does to your stomach," she explains.

The aim of exercise is to raise the heart beat while improving lung function. Bajaj explained to Sharma that, when he was lazing through the week and shocking his body with sudden exercise, he was in fact, straining his heart beyond capacity. "Irregular heart beats can cause a heart attack. Rajneesh corrected himself in time," says Bajaj.

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