

CHAPTER THIRTY NINE

Sports ¹

And bless our master Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) for as long as the Your creatures will stay in The Garden.

Swimming is a great activity

It tones your entire body while providing an excellent cardiovascular² workout; it strengthens your heart muscle and improves delivery of oxygen to muscles. Swimming is also a relaxing activity.

Swimming is probably the most nearly perfect form of exercise. It is non-weight bearing and imposes no stress on the bones and joints; it improves cardiovascular conditioning; it is an effective weight-control exercise -- one hour of swimming burns about as many calories as running six miles in one hour; and it is a form of meditation that helps calm the nerves. Swimming also uses most of the major muscle groups, and strengthens both the upper and lower body.

Swimming and Pregnancy?

Pregnant women can also benefit from swimming. Swimming can help them strengthen their abdominal and shoulder muscles. Abdominal and shoulder muscles are areas that are often taxed by carrying a baby. Water exercise can also reduce the joint stiffness, high blood pressure, and discomfort associated with pregnancy.

Swimming and Breast Cancer

Swimming after breast surgery is an excellent means of exercising all the major muscle groups, and avoiding muscular atrophy³ often seen in post-surgical patients who remain sedentary for prolonged periods. Swimming is also good because it strengthens the abdomen, back and shoulders. These muscles will help post-mastectomy⁴ women carry their weight more easily. ⁱ

Major Arthur Gillon Leonard states that when he came across swimming in the life of the Prophet of Islam he was surprised. He says "On the other hand when I looked at the might of the Prophet of Islam it became clear that swimming is good for the intellect, it relaxes the physical and mental side. Just think, it freshens the blood, strengthens the body by the movement of the arms and legs, it excercises all the parts of the body." ⁱⁱ

The Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would go for a swim too. ⁱⁱⁱ

Archery

What is so appealing about archery is its easiness and accessibility to just about everyone. Almost every age group can participate and enjoy this sport. While it is a fun sport, it is also physically demanding. By playing archery, you are increasing not only strength but also focus, flexibility, and attention skills.

Kelvin Leung, Age 13 said "Archery really improves you mentally because it teaches you concentration and patience." In a Hadith it states, "Teach your children Archery, Swimming, and to earn lawfully." ^{iv}

Benefits of Horse Riding

Horse riding teaches mentally and physically challenged individuals to achieve mobility and independence through riding horses. The benefits of riding, long recognised by a select group of equine therapists, gained national attention after James Brady, press secretary to then-President Ronald Reagan, was shot during an assassination attempt on the President's life. Paralysed, Brady turned to hippotherapy to help him in the rehabilitation process.

Twenty years later, equine facilitated therapy is recognised the world over as being instrumental in helping individuals with disabilities to conquer both physical and the mental challenges. Hippotherapy, from the Greek

¹ See Volume One, Chapter Sixty-Seven for this Sunnah

² This effects the circulation of blood around the body which brings about transport of nutrients and oxygen to the tissues and the removal of waste products.

³ The wasting away of a normally developed organ or tissue due to degeneration of cells.

⁴ Before surgical removal of breast.

word for “horse,” is based on the idea that the rhythmic, repetitive movements of the horse work to improve cognitive skills, balance, posture, and strength in the disabled rider. Individuals benefiting from this kind of therapy can have a variety of diagnoses, including cerebral palsy⁵, multiple sclerosis⁶, **stroke**, **autism**, and learning or language disabilities.

Muscular improvement

Horseback riding is particularly beneficial for wheelchair cases who have no natural means of locomotion. The movement of the horse relaxes and stimulates unused muscles, builds tone, strength and coordination. The warmth of the horse's body can soothe tight muscles and increase joint mobility. Interest in horses provides new incentives for learning. Vocabularies and attention spans increase, endurance increases, socialising is enhanced by the common bond with fellow students, and new friendships are formed with the volunteers.

‘Uqbah bin Aamar (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) saying, “All those things that a person plays are all incorrect (misguidance) except bow and arrow (target practise), teach a horse respect and spending time with your wife these three are the truth.”^v

i <http://www.mamashealth.com/exercise/swimben.asp>

ii Islam – Her moral and spiritual value

iii Shamail-e-Nabawi

2 Kanzul Ummal

v Tirmidhi and Abu Dawood

⁵ A disorder of movement and /or posture as a result of non progressive but permanent damage to the developing brain.

⁶ A chronic disease of the nervous system affecting young and middle-aged adults. The myelin sheaths surrounding nerves in the brain and spinal cord are damaged, which affect the function of the nerves involved.