

Staying Healthy in Palestine

Readers' Opinions

In a bid to engage our readers, wherever they reside, TWiP sent four questions related to health, which is the focus of this issue, to those on our mailing list. The number of responses we received was truly overwhelming, and we must apologize for not being able to publish all of them.

Below are responses to the first question – about whether or not staying in shape is a priority for you. Thank you all for taking the time to respond, and special thanks to Antoine Nesnas from Jerusalem for his elaborate response.

Question: Is staying in shape a priority for you? If so, how do you stay in shape?

Yes, it's a priority. I go to the gym three times a week. Cardio and muscle training.

Hani Mourad, Bethlehem

Yes, staying in shape is a top priority for me. In order to keep in shape, I walk at least twice a week for an hour each time, and I also watch what I eat. I try to eat fruits every day and less bread and meat.

Mkhaimar Abusada, Gaza

Yes, it's a priority! I exercise regularly (biking, walking), drink alcohol very moderately, and eat healthy food. I have also reduced my consumption of meat and meat products.

Martin Ohlen, Germany

I am 75. Working out is a huge priority. I go to the gym regularly and walk four miles, three or four times a week.

Mary Higgins, USA

Sure. I exercise regularly.

Ayman Safi, Ramallah

Sure. I stay in shape by thinking positive thoughts about Palestine and eating healthy food.

Antoine Raffoul, Italy

No

Daoud Kuttab, Jerusalem, Amman

Yes, it is a priority to stay in good shape. The main activity is a daily walk to stay in touch with nature. Walking offers the chance to sharpen your eyes, and it can add hundreds of colors to your life as you observe the planet and its plants and creatures. Second is transcendental meditation. It can give you a pure mind.

Liana Badr, Ramallah

Staying in shape is a priority for me. More than a year ago, I changed my lifestyle and began to choose healthier food with the help of a dietitian. So far, I am succeeding.

Lana Bandak, Jerusalem

Yes. I'm always trying to stay in shape. I lose and gain weight all the time, but I'm always stuck with bad eating habits, long hours of sitting due to the nature of my work – office work/marketing and procrastination.

Majdi Habash, Ramallah

In a time when most of our day is spent sitting and glaring at screens, it is imperative that we remind ourselves how important it is to move. I used to run when I was in high school, now I am lucky if I get a brisk walk from one chair to another. I try to make staying in shape a priority by doing ten-minute workouts before I sleep. It has become a part of my nightly routine to do three sets of ten forward lunges, usually while watching a stand-up comedy special so that the laughs might mask the pain.

Athar Joseph, Hebron/Chicago

To stay in shape is not a priority but survival must be. Regrettably, I do very little exercise, but I keep moving and try not to let my body get lazy.

Adnan Abdelrazek, Jerusalem

Yes. I hike and do yoga. I also eat nutritious, nourishing foods and get pretty good sleep.

Morgan Cooper, Ramallah

Absolutely. I try to cycle; I use stairs, no lifts; I've reduced my sugar intake – though I find it difficult.

Yara Sharif, Ramallah/London

Yes. By going to the gym for half an hour a day.

Toine van Teeffelen, Bethlehem/Holland

I have spent 12 years of my life trying to teach people that walking is the go-to medicine, especially when it comes to lifestyle diseases (cardiovascular disease and diabetes are the main causes of death in Palestine).

Carol Sansour, Beit Jala, Greece

Yes, for an "old man" of 65, I try to stay in shape. I aim to go to the local fitness center at least three times a week, but often I don't. I walk/jog on the treadmill for 30–60 minutes and use dumbbells to try to maintain some muscle mass as I age.

Paul Parker, Chicago

No! Staying in shape is the least of my worries.

Mahmoud Khweis, Jerusalem

It is one of my priorities. Staying in shape means maintaining a healthy lifestyle, which consists of two main components: good food and exercise. I try to sleep at six in the evening at least two to three days a week, but for those with busy minds, this might be the worst experience! I don't do a heavy workout. I do 45 minutes of fast-paced walking every other day and practice yoga one day a week. It helps my breathing and clears my mind.

Doha Al-Wazany, Nablus



Yes, indeed, staying in shape is and has always been a priority for me. My late brother, may God bless his soul, and I realized early on how important regular exercise is. At grade school age, we started regular sessions of aerobic exercise and fixed a water pipe between two solid walls of our house in the Old City at a substantial height to do bar exercises that we devised on our own. We also used homemade dumbbells (from plumbing scrap) and used to exercise with a five-spring chest expander that we'd bought second hand. At school we regularly played volleyball. Later on, I got interested in cycling and rode twice a week from Jerusalem to Ramallah. At that time, there were no buildings between Shuafat and the flour mill at Ma'loufieh at the entrance of Ramallah. Cycling remained my preferred and only means of transportation and exercise even when I started working in Cyprus. I went from city to city on my bike as well as to nearby and far away beaches. There, I took risks and learned the art of swimming on my own, eventually swimming almost daily. I was also keen on taking long, brisk walks which I do even today. Until about three years ago, my exercise partner was the late Dr. Caesar Raad. We would walk three to five kilometers at a brisk pace for five or six days a week. I have since been lucky to find a new walking partner in Aida Aoun, the wife of my nephew. We walk four kilometers at least four times a week, and I still use dumbbells (but the ones I use now I have purchased) for 15 to 20 minutes at irregular intervals.

Antoine Nesnas, Jerusalem

Eating well, keeping active.

Ramzi Sansur, Ramallah

It is a priority to stay in shape, I walk about 10 kilometers every day. This is part of my work as I have to walk around several construction sites in the Old City. When this is not needed, I just take walks in the Old City. It is my addiction.

Simon Kouba, Jerusalem

Yes. I walk almost every day, and occasionally run and swim.

Fida Jiryis, Fassouta, the Galilee

Yes, it is a priority; I try to commit to exercising three times per week.

Rajiah Abu Sway, Jerusalem

Yes, it is.

Ahlam Tarayra, Hebron

Absolutely. Health and well-being do not come spontaneously. It's a process of engagement and awareness of one's health. I therefore carefully choose my food and try to be as healthy as possible by working out on a regular basis. I either run or walk at least three times a week, and I've made fruits and vegetables fundamental ingredients of my daily diet. No cola or similar drinks. And absolutely no smoking!

Yahya Al-Salqan, Al-Bireh

It is a priority as I enter my fourth decade. I try to walk a little each day, and I leave my desk whenever possible to talk to my colleagues face-to-face. I avoid sugar as much as I can.

Nader Dagher, Ramallah

Unfortunately, it is not!

David Dahdal, Jerusalem

Yes, exercising is very important to me, for both my physical and mental health. Most of us tend to be sedentary at work, and we drive everywhere instead of walking, so it's very important that we plan a schedule of exercise. I swim twice a week and go to the gym twice a week. I also walk with friends in my neighborhood. After exercising, I feel lighter and happier due to the rush of endorphins. I recommend it to everyone.

Mona Halaby, USA

Yes, walking.

Rami Meo, Sydney

Yes, light sports, walking, and food control.

Wasef Daher, Jerusalem

Staying in shape is a priority for me. I stay in shape through conscious eating, practicing yoga, and doing other outdoor activities.

Bisan Samamreh, Hebron

Yes, I exercise and eat healthy.

Randa Farah, Canada

Staying in shape should be a priority for everybody. The least one can do is walk. I try to keep a positive attitude, regularly check my blood, listen to my doctor's advice, and try to laugh a lot.

William Alonzo, Jerusalem

Yes, it's important for health purposes.

Terry Bullata, Jerusalem

Staying in shape is a top priority and is done through sports, daily walks, healthy food (most of the time), and work on inner peace.

Ibtisam Husary, Ramallah

Even though I am not the fittest person in the room, I nevertheless aim to stay in shape through a balanced meal plan with a focus on healthy macronutrients (more protein, less fat and carbs, and even less sugar), intermittent fasting (12 hours at a time), and exercise: walking my dog, soccer with the guys, and hitting the gym.

George Khoury, Jerusalem

Yes, and I feel so much better. Running half-marathons while traveling. Bethlehem, Geneva, Havana, Faroe Islands, Switzerland.

Bo Schack, Norway

Yes, exercise and eating healthy food; and no smoking or drinking alcohol.

Basema Spijkerman, The Netherlands

Definitely. I normally have healthy food and do some sports periodically. For me, food must contain vegetables: salads and soup. It's always good to have fruits during the day. As they say, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away!" With my busy schedule, I also I maintain at least one hour of walking.

Najah Osaily, Hebron

Absolutely, yes! I try to move as little as possible so as not to disturb my shape.

Sam Bahour