

Fitness Forum: Doctor's fitness program keeps him healthy and happy

by Jack Williams

Once Dr. Martin Gilboa figures out the iPod Nano his kids gave him for his 60th birthday, he can turn up the volume on his exercise routine.

"I may just keep running all the way up the coast," he says.

Workouts are almost always a day at the beach for Gilboa. If he's not taking the low tide in stride, he's communing with the ospreys, hawks, egrets and herons and changing flora of Southern California's San Elijo Lagoon - protected by ample sunscreen and propelled by a passion for nature.

THE BEST MEDICINE - Dr. Martin Gilboa, who tries to run 50 to 55 miles a week, spent his lunch break jogging on Carlsbad State Beach in San Diego County. CNS Photo by Sean DuFrene. "Sometimes, I think about problems in life and try to solve them," he says. "And sometimes, I just fantasize and dream - something adults need to do, too."

Consider it therapy for the soul, a prescription for peak performance.

Gilboa, a Kaiser Permanente pediatrician, creatively squeezes 50 to 55 weekly miles of running - mostly on soft, forgiving surfaces - into 55-hour workweeks.

Even if he pulls an all-nighter at the hospital, a weekly requirement, he laces up his running shoes the next day for nine or 10 not-so-forgiving miles. "My toughest run of the week," he calls it.

For good measure, Gilboa alternates 2,000 meters of swimming with weight training on weekday mornings. You'll never find him taking an elevator when the stairs will do, and he would rather walk or bike than drive.

His idea of hiking is to scale Half Dome (elevation 8,842 feet) from the Yosemite Valley floor and to circle Mount Blanc in the French Alps, the highest peak in Western Europe.

Fact is, his appetite for fitness may be equaled only by his urge to eat. Especially all that wild Alaskan salmon he stocks up on in the summer.

"Three months in the freezer, it's still excellent," he said. "Up to six months, it's still fine."

At a wiry 5-feet-11, 155 pounds, Gilboa's durability matches his desire.

He started running 40 years ago on the UCLA cross-country course while attending UCLA Medical School.

"Some may think that I'm crazy to be doing all this exercise, but I strongly believe that it helps keep my mind and body healthy despite a very demanding work schedule," he says. "When I am running on the beach during lunch, I feel that I'm on vacation, and after showering I know that my patients are greeted by the happiest doctor in the world."

WHO'S COUNTING?

When you're as active as Gilboa, you log miles, not calories. "I eat whatever I want; I enjoy good food and chocolate," he said. He starts the day with a sandwich on the run. A bountiful salad, including feta cheese, veggies and romaine lettuce, awaits him at lunch. He enjoys "big steaks," chicken or fish as a main dinner entree, often washed down with wine or beer.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

Gilboa takes 1,500 milligrams a day of a glucosamine/chondroitin joint formula, 900 mg of calcium and an

81-mg aspirin. Although his blood cholesterol is normal, he takes a cholesterol-lowering statin drug as a preventive measure. But his main medicine is exercise. During 13 years in his wife Ruth's native Sweden, he cross-country skied and ran in the snow. "I never cancel a run because of the weather," he said.

TOUR DE FITNESS

Gilboa can hammer out six miles at an eight-minute pace on his hospital treadmill during his overnight shift but prefers a more leisurely 16-miler on weekends over varied terrain. "Sixteen is about my limit," he said. "I don't think the marathon (26.2 miles) is really healthy. I listen to my body and do what makes me feel good." He admits to a two-month bout with plantar fasciitis about 12 years ago and a few abrasions from tripping on rock-strewn trails. Yet, considering the years of pounding, he's been remarkably free of injury.

CROSS TRAINING

Before his regular 9 a.m. work shift, he'll either swim at the San Dieguito Boys and Girls Club or lift weights on the equipment in his home. "Nothing heavy," he said. "I do up to 30 reps and one set for each muscle group. It definitely makes me a better swimmer. It makes me look better, and upper body strength is important."

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