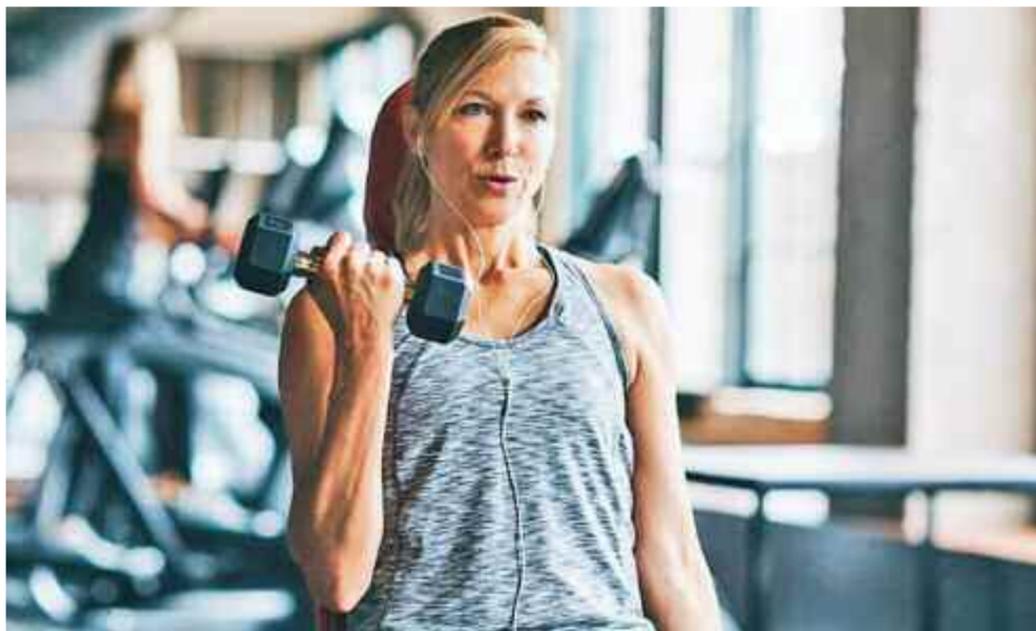


# Fit at 40

Work hard on your fitness and you may just be able to turn back your biological clock....



HEALTH

When I see women in their 40s, working out and leading a healthy and active lifestyle, I'm left in awe of their fit and healthy bodies. These physically strong and energetic women are challenging our pre-conceived notions about middle-aged women. Unfortunately, Pakistani society still hasn't been used to seeing a 40+ woman working out and talking about leading an active lifestyle. Osteoporosis, slow metabolism, decreased muscle tone and hitting menopause is usually associated with 40 plus women. But researches in the medical and science fields are showing that the seemingly impossible is possible: Work hard on your fitness and you may just be able to turn back your biological clock.

You can start working out at any age: According to WHO guidelines for optimal health, people aged 18-64+ should do at least a total of 150-300 mins of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity in a

week and should also do muscle-strengthening activities at moderate or greater intensity twice or thrice weekly. Spread exercise evenly over 4 to 5 days a week or every day. Imagine exercising less than an hour every day to be lean, fit, active, lively and robust for decades to come. Aerobic exercises work on the cardio respiratory (Heart and lungs) system whereas strength training improves the musculoskeletal (muscles, bones, joints) system. Each should be performed as part of a comprehensive fitness program keeping in mind the current fitness level that a person has. If someone has never exercised in their life, they shouldn't be worry. The great news is that it's not impossible to start training after 40s. Getting up every day to exercise is something you need to work on. Once you start, nothing should stop you from getting active. Talking to a fitness professional is a great way to embark on this journey and then maintain on your own for life.

Consistency is the key: Aging is in-

evitable. Everyone has to age but you can be fit and look good at any age. Do you know that a number of common illnesses like hypertension, diabetes, blood pressure, brittle bones, and fractures are lifestyle-related? They can be controlled if we include exercise in our daily regimen. When we exercise, it triggers repair, renewal and growth at the cellular level in our bodies.

**Fit at 40:** The more we exert our bodies with healthy physical stress, the more our muscles and tissues are rejuvenated. The gains of working out are magnificent! It's not just a win-win situation for the physical body but it also harmonises the mental health. Exercising sends chemical signals to our brain through which our bodies become lean, powerful and agile. The happy hormones – endorphins lightens our mood and de-stresses our mind. No wonder, a strong body has a strong mind.

Being a fitness trainer I have observed that women usually flock to the gyms during wedding season. They even join pro-

grammes like 42 day challenges and restore to crash diets to fit into wedding clothes and survive the never ending, back to back events. However, as soon as the wedding season is over, they go back to their old habits. I believe that if women are consistent in their fitness training and mindful eating daily, there's absolutely no need to delve into extreme measures or crash dieting at any given time.

**Strength training:** For middle aged women, resistance or strength training is the key to feeling younger and healthy. It increases your muscle mass, stamina, improves mobility and functionality, increases bone density, improves cognitive function, boosts metabolism and maintains hormonal balance in the body. Squats, Lunges, push-ups, pull ups, deadlifts, planks are some of the movements performed in a typical strength training plan. A proper periodised programme, including movement sequences for different muscle groups, must be followed keeping your current fitness level in mind. Strength training improves muscular endurance and makes you powerful. However, it is a myth that women must not lift weights. Lifting weights and doing resistance exercises does not turn a woman into a body builder but it makes her body stronger and gives it a good shape. If you make strength training a part of your regular fitness regimen and follow it with consistency then be prepared to have a toner, leaner and a stronger body to show off.

**DIY:** As much as joining a gym would be a great opportunity to include multiple training modalities for both strength and cardio, it shouldn't stop someone to be active without a gym membership. Brisk walking, jogging or running outdoors/indoors takes your heart rate up and is an excellent form of cardio. Climbing 4-5 flight of stairs at least thrice a day is another aerobic activity which is easily doable. If one doesn't have stairs at home, a regular stool can be used to climb up and down and accelerate your heart rate.

Biking, swimming, jumping rope, heavy cleaning or gardening are some of the examples of aerobic exercises, if done daily for 20 -30 mins, will improve your cardio respiratory health. Regular cardio lowers your blood pressure, maintains your cholesterol, reduces asthma symptoms, aids sleep and improves agility

which reduces the risk of falling. Trust me, incorporating cardio in your fitness regimen after hitting 40s is a key to turn back the dial of your biological clock. And who doesn't want that?

**No excuses:** My give away message for all 40+ women is to start taking your fitness journey seriously. Instead of getting old and wobbly with bad joints, weak heart and sluggish muscles, start looking after yourselves from today. Set your bodies to



a default mode by doing aerobic exercises four days a week and strength training two days a week for the rest of your lives.

If hiring a personal trainer is impossible then subscribe to any YouTube channel run by trained fitness professionals and you would be able to exercise in the comforts of your homes.

The one thing that pandemic has taught us is to effectively and efficiently work from home. So no excuses, start moving from today and age backwards... All the best!

## Potential dangers of increased melatonin use for sleep

A good night's sleep is essential for good physical health, cognitive performance, and emotional functioning. Numerous sleep studies have documented these facts over time.

More and more adults are taking over-the-counter (OTC) melatonin preparations to get a better night's rest, but some of them may be taking this substance at dangerously high levels, a new study finds. Experts worry that the coronavirus pandemic's negative effect on sleep has further increased the reliance on melatonin and other sleeping aids. In the recent study, researchers obtained data from ten cycles of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) Trusted Source, covering the years 1999 through 2018. This study included 55,021 adults, 52% of whom were women. The participants had a mean age of 47.5 years. The results showed that in 2018, adults in the United States took more than twice the amount of this sleep aid than they did a decade earlier, which may pose a health risk in some individuals. The study revealed that melatonin use increased from 0.4% in 1999–2000 to 2.1% in 2017–2018, with the increase beginning in 2009–2010. The study was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Trusted Source, and the lead author is Dr. Jingen Li, Ph.D., of Beijing University of Chinese Medicine.

The study evaluated adults who took melatonin at the recommended dosage of 5 milligrams per day (mg/d), as well as those who exceeded that dosage. Before 2005–2006, the authors found that users did not report taking



more than 5 mg/d, but the prevalence of taking more than 5 mg/d went from 0.08% in 2005–2006 to 0.28% in 2017–2018. Although the overall use of melatonin in the U.S. is still relatively low, the study does “document a significant many-fold increase in melatonin use in the past few years,” according to sleep specialist Rebecca Robbins, Ph.D., who is an instructor in the division of sleep medicine at Harvard Medical School and was not involved in this study. “Taking sleep aids has

been linked to prospective studies with the development of dementia and early mortality Trusted Source. Melatonin is one such sleep aid.” The body's biological clock regulates hormonal fluctuations, which evolve over a person's lifespan. As a result, aging often affects activities such as sleep and wake patterns, which, in some cases, become increasingly disrupted and fragmented. Melatonin is a key hormone that governs the body's circadian rhythms. —AFP

## Breast cancer death rate in Black women: Does DNA repair play a role?

Researchers from Sanford Burnham Prebys led a new study that explored why Black women with breast cancer have a higher mortality rate than white women with breast cancer. The researchers learned that there is a molecular difference between the processes for repairing damaged DNA within the cells. The results of the study indicate that doctors may need to adjust treatment plans for Black women with breast cancer to improve their chances of surviving. Less positive outcomes in Black women with breast cancer are due, at least in part, to racial disparities in healthcare.

The authors of one paper Trusted Source write, “Despite medical improvements in early detection, diagnosis, and screening, many Black women are less likely to obtain adequate treatment compared with white women.” new study, which appears in Therapeutic Advances in Medical Oncology, indicates that biological factors may add to this disparity. he study examined genetic differences between Black women and white women and found that there is a difference in the cellular response to damaged DNA. Metastatic Breast Cancer: What You Should Know Hear from our medical experts about symptoms, treatment options, tips for living with metastatic cancer, and the outlook. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Trusted Source, in the United States, about 255,000 women develop breast cancer each year, and approximately 42,000 women die. Overall, breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among women. The demographic data for 2018 indicated that the rate of breast

cancer occurrence between Black women and white women was similar.

Among Black women, the rate of new breast cancer cases was 121.2 per 100,000 women. In comparison, among white women, the rate was 127.5 per 100,000. Although there was only a 5% difference in the breast cancer case rate between Black women and white women, the difference in mortality rate was much greater. According to the 2018 data, white women had a breast cancer mortality rate of 19.2 per 100,000 cases, and the mortality rate for Black women was 26.8 per 100,000 cases. This equates to an approximately 40% higher rate in Black women than in white women. Dr. Lola Fayanju speaks about breast cancer in a podcast with BreastCancer.org Trusted Source, in which she notes the difference in mortality rate. Dr. Fayanju is the surgical director at Rena Rowan Breast Center in Philadelphia.

“In the United States, white women are actually the most likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer of any racial or ethnic group,” Dr. Fayanju says. “But there are significant disparities in terms of who is most likely to die from breast cancer, which is, for the most part, a highly curable disease.” “For early stage breast cancer, rates of survival are often greater than 90%, but among Women of Color, particularly African American women, we see much worse mortality rates, and that's in part related to the fact that we have people presenting with later stage disease,” Dr. Fayanju explains. Some studies indicate that socioeconomic status Trusted Source is an important cause of the increased mortality rate. —Agencies

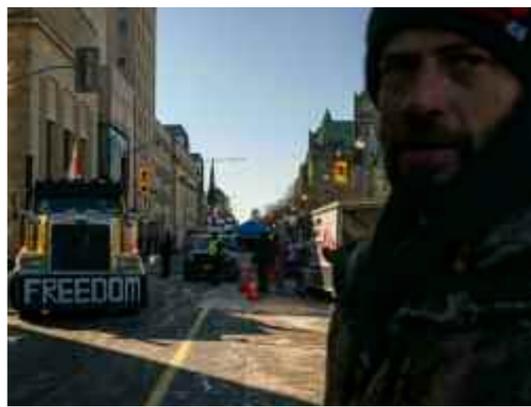


## New Zealand virus cases spike as anti-vaccine protesters claim win

WELLINGTON: New Zealand COVID-19 infections reached a record high Wednesday as anti-vaccine protesters claimed victory after police failed to clear vehicles blocking the streets around parliament.

Health authorities reported 1,160 new coronavirus cases, the most since the pandemic began, as the Omicron variant continues to spread in a country that was largely virus-free until August. While there have only been 53 virus deaths in the nation of five million, some protesters have taken to the streets railing against COVID-related restrictions and a government vaccination drive.

Demonstrators inspired by Canada's "Freedom Convoy" jammed roads with cars, trucks and campervans last week, then set up camp on the lawns of parliament in the capital Wellington. A tense stand-off in the city centre has stretched for nine



days, with police largely taking a hand-off approach, aside from violent clashes last Thursday that led to the arrest of 122 protesters. But law enforcement officials ramped up the rhetoric late Tuesday, describing the protests as “untenable” and saying tow

trucks would be used to clear the streets. Police Commissioner Andrew Coster said he had asked for the military's help, warning anyone who obstructed the “imminent” operation that they faced arrest. However, no tow trucks were deployed Wednesday, and

when a line of police tried to take control of an area near the parked vehicles, they were met by massed demonstrators chanting “whose streets, our streets”.

The protesters cheered when police withdrew behind barricades a short time later. Assistant Commissioner Richard Chambers defended the cautious approach taken by police. “This remains an incredibly challenging and complex situation to manage, and police are taking care not to escalate matters unnecessarily,” he said.

Police have previously expressed concern about the large number of children in the protest camp, accusing demonstrators of trying to use them as human shields to avoid arrest. Parliamentary speaker Trevor Mallard, who is responsible for running the legislature, took matters into his own hands over the weekend, blasting pop music at the demonstrators on a loop. —AFP