Exercise can have a significant role in managing chronic health issues, especially considering that most chronic ailments can only be managed by medications and not cured. By examining various health issues such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, osteoarthritis, chronic pain, and some mental health disorders, we uncover the power of regular exercise in improving these conditions. Exercise offers a healthier and more sustainable approach to weight loss compared to medications or strict diets. It can lead to diabetes remission, reduce complications, prevent and reverse hypertension, improve joint function and pain, and even positively impact mental health disorders. Furthermore, exercise benefits brain health and lowers the risk of dementia, Parkinson’s, cancer, and more. Embracing exercise as a lifestyle change is crucial for individuals to enhance their overall well-being and pave the way for a healthier life.

A acute health issues like infectious conditions and acute trauma do not last long. Such health issues require immediate help. Though some acute issues might be life-threatening, people emerge as more resilient after recovering from these issues. However, chronic illnesses are different. They develop slowly over time and last several months or even a lifetime. In most cases, chronic health issues like osteoarthritis, diabetes, hypertension, dementia, and many more keep progressing, causing continuous pain and distress.

Modern medicine for chronic ailments, managing chronic diseases remains challenging due to limited pharmacological options for chronic illnesses. In the case of chronic diseases, modern medicine is either entirely helpless or can provide symptomatic treatment at best; it can help keep the condition more or less under control.

Since medicine cannot cure most chronic health issues like hypertension, diabetes, osteoarthritis, Parkinson’s, depression, and many others, a person has to live with these conditions for years. Therefore, chronic diseases result in a significant decline in the quality of life.

One of the reasons so many people continue to live with chronic disorders is that they keep taking medications to suppress their symptoms. However, they make little effort to overcome chronic ailments.

Overcoming chronic ailments require significant lifestyle changes, which many, if not most, fail to make. It means making significant dietary changes, sleeping well, practicing mindfulness, and above all, starting moving more beginning doing exercise. Exercise is known to benefit most chronic ailments, and below we look at some health issues that can be significantly managed with regular exercise.

Obesity
One of the biggest reasons why the world is becoming unhealthier and developing so many chronic health issues is obesity. In developed nations like the US, 70 per cent of adults are either overweight or obese. And, yes, it is now regarded as a disease and not merely a risk factor for other health issues like diabetes or heart disease.

Of course, some pills help with weight loss, but you regain weight as soon as you stop taking those pills. Not to say that medications may cause much harm. A strict diet would also help, but if you go too low, it may cause nutritional deficiencies.

Journey to Health
Exercise’s role in preventing and managing chronic diseases

Therefore, exercise is the healthiest and most natural way for weight loss. You do not need to spend hours in a gym to lose body weight; it is crucial to get started. Even 15 minutes a day can be life-transforming. However, aim for 45 minutes of moderate daily activity in the long run.

Diabetes
In the US, about 11-12 per cent of adults live with diabetes, and another 35 per cent are prediabetic. Of course, wrong dietary measures are among the most important causes of diabetes. However, lack of physical activity is also among the primary reasons.

There is no known drug or medication that can cure diabetes. Medications can just lower blood sugar levels and delay the development of diabetes-related complications. However, if started early enough, exercise can lead to diabetes remission. Aerobic exercise combined with some resistance training is the right way to overcome diabetes.

Not only can it help with diabetes remission, it may even help with diabetes-related complications like neuropathies, muscle wasting, heart issues, and more. Those who exercise regularly, or at least five times a week, are highly unlikely to develop diabetes. Even if you develop diabetes, exercise is the best way to get control over it.

Need proof? Then look at the study, which says that 80 per cent of those diagnosed with type 2 diabetes may reverse it through weight loss and exercise within six months. However, regretfully, most people would prefer taking pills daily to exercise.
Hypertension
Exercise is your best bet whether you are at risk or living with hypertension. It is the most effective natural way to eliminate the so-called “silent killer.” Doctors call it a silent killer as it does not cause many symptoms in the early stages, but it significantly increases your risk of heart disease and stroke in the long run.

Studies show that even 30 minutes of exercise five days a week prevents hypertension and even reverses mild hypertension. Combining 30 mins of aerobic exercise with three days a week of resistance training is also good. In fact, a single session of continuous exercise for 30 minutes can lower your blood pressure for about 24 hours and by about 5mmHg, and it is called post-exercise hypotension.3

Joint disorders
Globally about 16 per cent of adults are living with osteoarthritis alone. But do not forget that it is just one kind of joint disorder.4 More than one-fourth of adults are living with significant joint pain. Painkillers help reduce pain and inflammation. However, exercise is the only way to alter the course of these health issues. American Family Physician findings say exercise can significantly reduce pain and improve joint function.5

Chronic pain
Pain is the most common reason for people to seek medical attention. Unfortunately, millions of adults are living with chronic pain. They may have low back pain, body aches, headaches, etc. Widespread pain is making the opioid crisis worse in the US. Yet, such strong painkillers like opioids only provide temporary relief, and they do almost nothing to change the course of the disease. Therefore, if you want to get rid of chronic pain, remember that regular exercise is the best option.

Mental health disorders
Anxiety and depression are becoming all too common. Most people would experience these issues in life. Pharmacological pills can only help a bit with these mental health disorders.4 That is why all wise men say that money cannot buy happiness, as all that money can afford are pills that often fail to help.

However, happiness can be earned by practicing mindfulness, socializing, and exercising regularly.

Above is just an example of how exercise is the best remedy for some of the widely prevalent chronic health issues. However, remember that exercise would reduce your risk or even help overcome any chronic health issue. Exercise is also good for brain health, lowering the risk of dementia, Parkinson’s, cancer, and much more. So, to stay healthy, start moving, and begin exercising.

References are available at www.asianhhm.com

Saint-Vil is the founder of the ExerciseNow.org platform and the Medical Director of the Sports Medicine department at Marietta Memorial Hospital. He is a fellowship-trained Sports Medicine physician and a published researcher who has published countless articles promoting healthy lifestyles on Sports Medicine and fitness-related topics. He believes exercise is the best health insurance. Among his academic interests is Platelet Rich Plasma’s use to regenerate tendons, ligaments, cartilage, and other soft tissues.