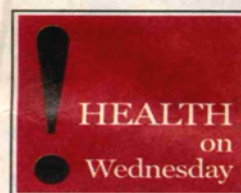


## WATCH WHAT YOU EAT, DRINK



**EXERCISE REGIMEN:** Ms Stafford either cycles for 1½ to two hours and swims for an hour, or runs 45 minutes to 1½ hours every day. She works out five days a week.

When training for a triathlon, she cycles for two hours in the morning and swims 3.2km in the evenings. She does this six times a week.

**EATING HABITS:** Because of her level of exercise, she says she does not need to watch what she eats. Her diet consists mainly of complex carbohydrates, protein, and fruits. She drinks 1-1½ litres of water every day. Junk food and deep fried foods are a no-no.

She does not believe in taking vitamins and health supplements because she believes it is better to eat healthily.

**STRESS RELIEVER:** Reading or going to the theatre or movies by herself. "Time out alone is very important."

**KEEP FIT TIP:** "I believe in working out five days a week. Consistency is most important. Even if 10 minutes is all you can afford, start with that. It will automatically increase over time."

### WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY:

They agree that Ms Stafford's training volume is adequate. However, there are some things that she should be aware of.

Dr Ben Tan, consultant sports physician at Changi Sports Medicine Centre, advises her to be conscientious about her diet. "The training burns so many calories that the average diet will certainly be inadequate, especially in terms of carbohydrates."

He says that she should raise her carbohydrate intake as it will give her more energy to train and to train harder.

Dr Kelvin Chew, sports physician at Alexandra Hospital, warns that she may be drinking too little water. An athlete can lose as much as 2.7 to 3.6kg of sweat per hour depending on the intensity of training. "Dehydration can be avoided by drinking 500ml of fluid two hours before exercise, followed by another 500ml about 15 to 20 minutes before exercise."

He says that women who participate in endurance sports often have inadequate calories because they want to maintain a lighter physique.

"They may be unable to maintain the critical amount of body fat. Together with the stresses of training, this could lead to menstrual disorders like amenorrhoea, or no menses. This menstrual disorder could in turn lead to osteoporosis."

### SOME GENERAL GUIDELINES:

- ◆ Build distance before speed. Have a well-rounded training programme. Do not try to achieve too much too soon.
- ◆ Proper warm-ups and stretching at every training session to maintain flexibility
- ◆ Vary training intensity and volume. Try cross training.
- ◆ Strength training should be included to preserve lean body mass.
- ◆ Have a balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids
- ◆ Listen to your body. Do not ignore the early warning signs of over-training such as excessive fatigue, decreased performance, depression, diffused muscle soreness and increased resting heart rate.



**LIFE CYCLE:** A healthy body equals a healthy mind, says corporate trainer Stafford, who puts health first, then family and work.

# First triathlon at age 39

*Starting late has its benefits, says 42-year-old Sharlyn Stafford, as older athletes have better mental stamina*



Elisabeth Gwee

BODY TALK

SHARLYN STAFFORD was 25 when she made it her goal to take part in a triathlon.

But work and family commitments meant she had to put that plan on hold until she was 39 years old.

And it was well worth the wait, she says.

In 1999, she travelled to Australia to take part in the Noosa Triathlon in Queensland.

"It was exhilarating. And the sense of accomplishment I felt was amazing. I've been on a roll since," says the 42-year-old Sri Lankan-born Canadian, who has lived here for 11 years.

Plus, there are advantages that come with age. "While the younger ones have physical strength, those 35 and above have more mental strength. They have the determination, discipline and commitment that are crucial to achieving their goal."

She has since taken part in a dozen triathlons in Singapore, Thailand and Australia.

She is currently training for her most challenging event so far — her first Half-Iron Man contest in Desaru on Sept 13. She will have to swim 2km, bike 90km, and run 21km.

The most she has done is a 1.8km swim, 55km bike ride and 12km run. That was for a triathlon in Phuket last year, for which she came in fourth in her age group.

The mother of two, aged 14 and 15, has been training for the Half Iron-Man contest since April. She hopes to complete the course in under six hours.

But she is quick to point out that she is a recreational triathlete. "I do this because I'm very goal-oriented and I love to be physically fit."

She has been active in sports from a young age and believes that "a healthy body is a healthy mind".

"Exercise raises the level of endorphins and makes you feel

more happy and less stressed. It has a positive impact on relationships. That's why, for me, health comes first, and then family and work."

She adds that exercise puts her in the right frame of mind for work. She has been running her own corporate training company here for the last nine years, teaching business presentation and communication skills.

"I've always wanted to make a difference in people's lives. I can do that in my line of work, which is why it's so important to have a

sense of balance and to be centred, because it comes out in what I do."

She says that working out is also a great way to build her social network. She met her husband, a business development manager, while they were part of the same exercise group.

And she does not see herself slowing down any time soon. "I hope to be taking part in triathlons for the next 30 years. I'm happiest when I'm being physical. I'd wither away and die if I wasn't."

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