

[Get fit - whatever your age](#)

Wednesday 4 Feb, 2009

Get up and get active say Dubai racquet enthusiasts who are currently training for a Seniors Tennis Championship

Do you secretly yearn to be a male or female superhero, even though your body's telling you that age and inaction have taken their toll? Take heart from a group of senior tennis players in Dubai, who, all aged between 45 and 55, are well able to whip around the court with the best of them.



Tennis enthusiast Liz Voltman from Love Sports in Dubai, has organised the first ITF Seniors Tennis Tournament to take place at the Aviation Club in March. It's open to everyone who wants to play competitive tennis in a tournament, and Liz says there is even a player coming over from the UK who is 75 years of age. We met up with Liz and her tennis pals, who are all competing in the upcoming tournament, to find out more about why they think it's important to keep fit and healthy. "If I don't exercise, I stiffen up, my mind isn't as alert. I just don't feel healthy," says Liz, 54. Marceline van der Ree, 45, who plays tennis, golf, does pilates and jogs says it's the 'feel-good' factor of exercising that she enjoys, as well as the fun social aspect.

"I have moved around a lot and have always met people through golf. It's very social." While some of his friends struggle when confronted with a long walk or steep climb, Vv Sukumar, 57, who has played tennis for 30 years, says sport has kept him fighting fit. "It is very important to keep fit for me. It is the basic requirement to stay healthy. "The days I play I feel a difference. When I don't play I feel lethargic and sluggish," s! ays Sukumar.

Iris Langdell, a sports therapist at Orthosports Medical Centre in Dubai encourages any tournament or exercise that focuses on fitness in the latter years. It's vital for health and agility, she says.

Why? Well unfortunately as you age you naturally lose your muscles, but exercise can help stop this. "Muscle loss starts after the age of 30. When you lose muscle tone, it decreases your metabolism, so you put on more fat. Therefore you are generally less healthy," says Iris. "Less muscle means your joints aren't supported as well as they should be, and you can start having knee and joint problems. "Exercise is the number one thing to ward off osteopenia and osteoporosis too. Take up a sport or weight-bearing activity and you can stop osteoporosis in its tracks, and also build up your muscles too." n your latter years, Iris also notes that people tend to lose their mobility, balance and co-ordination. Exercise prevents this however, and gives you a better quality of life. "It keeps the mind and body young and fit," she says.

BE A SENIOR SUPERHERO

Jamie Milnes, the trainer who helped Harrison Ford, 66, get in shape gives his fitness tips.

- Make a plan and stick to it - "Random exercising, and trying to devise your own workout rarely works," Jamie says. "You need a planned workout to see improvements and maintain gains that help to keep you on track, and inspire you to continue. "Having a gym buddy or a personal trainer to start you off, or give you a boost if you start flagging after a few months, can be really helpful."
- Don't over do it- "Once you are in your 40s and beyond it's vital to understand that your body takes longer to recover from just about every activity," Jamie explains. "You shouldn't overstretch yourself, or try and leap back into exercise routines, especially if you've done nothing for years. If you do, the only thing you will gain is injury." He suggests taking it gently initially and building the pace. Also avoid exercise that can jar the joints like long-distance running.
- Mix it up- "Many people make the mistake of focusing on one area, like the abs," Jamie says. "This never works and you're more likely to quit through boredom." "Instead, exercise the whole body, and perform as many different exercises as possible. "Look at weight training, as well as isolation exercises like bicep curls and crunches," he suggests.