When A Rabbi Recommends To Work Out

In the fourth chapter of MT Hilkhot de'ot, Maimonides says that keeping a strong and healthy body helps to prevent sickness, allowing us to serve HaShem with all our strength.*"Maintaining a healthy and sound body is among the ways of [serving] God , for one cannot understand or have any knowledge of the Creator, if he is ill."*In that chapter, Halakha 14, the great rabbi and Cordovan physician explains the importance of working out.De'ot 4, Halakha 14

*There is another principle with regard to physical well-being: As long as one exercises, exerts himself greatly, and does not eat to the point of satiation … he will not suffer sickness and he will grow in strength….*This Halakha, written more than 800 years ago, resonates in our modern ears, and allows us to appreciate that our Rabbis anticipated a long time ago the main principles of preventive medicine.Maimonides wrote in Hilkhot de'ot a brief summary of his medical advises. What is perhaps less knows is that he also authored many medical treatises, for Jews and non Jews alike.

Today I like to share with you some of Maimonides' advises on the importance of physical activity. I will quote the words of Maimonides from the book 'The life transforming diet', by David Zulberg, which is based on Maimonides' medical principles.

"Hippocrates taught that exercise is the cornerstone of the preservation of health and the prevention of most illness. There is nothing that can substitute for exercise in any way" (p. 99)

"Without exercise diet alone is not sufficient for the preservation of health, and eventually medical treatment will be needed" (p. 100)

'Hippocrates said that someone who is used to physical activity, even if he has a sick body or is old, is able to tolerate [illness and recover from it] better than a healthy person who is not used to physical activity" (p. 102)

This text is from a letter Maimonides sent to one of this patients "As to what you mentioned, that you feel weak after exercises, the cause of this is the omission of regular exercises. If you resume exercising gradually, little by little, you will achieve…strength and vitality…" (p. 102)

De'ot 4, Halakha 15

… whoever sits idle and does not exercise, … even if he eats the proper foods and takes care to follow the rules of medicine, will suffer pain [and illness]… and his strength will fade away.

A list of Maimonides medical works

Maimonides wrote ten known medical works in Arabic. They have been translated by Rabbi Fred Rosner into contemporary English.

1. **Extracts from Galen**,
or The Art of Cure, is essentially an extract of Galen's extensive writings.
2. **Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates** combined with Maimonides own views.
3. **Medical Aphorisms of Moses**,
titled Fusul Musa in Arabic ("Chapters of Moses," Pirkei Moshe in Hebrew) contains 1500 aphorisms and many medical conditions are described.
4. **Treatise on Hemorrhoids**
discusses also digestion and food.
5. **Treatise on Cohabitation**
contains the medical advices for a healthy sexual life.
6. **Treatise on Asthma**
discusses climates and diets and their effect on asthma and emphasizes the need for clean air.
7. **Treatise on Poisons and Their Antidotes**
a toxicology textbook .
8. **Regimen of Health**
is a discourse on healthy living and the mind-body connection.
9. **Discourse on the Explanation of Fits**
advocates healthy living and the avoidance of overabundance.
10. **Glossary of Drug Names**
a pharmacopeia a with 405 paragraphs with the names of drugs in Arabic, Greek, Syrian, Persian, Berber, and Spanish.