

## **Don't over-exercise during flu outbreaks**

While exercise is generally good for health, a study conducted by the University of Hong Kong has found that frequent exercise would increase the risk of contracting diseases, particularly during outbreak of influenza, a disease that claims about 1,000 lives in Hong Kong each year.

This is because exercise lowers briefly the body's ability (immune system) to fight off diseases such as influenza. It is, therefore, advisable to exercise moderately during outbreaks of influenza even though the weakening of the immune system during exercise is a temporary phenomenon

The HKU study focused on the relationship between exercise and influenza-related deaths. It found that people who exercised moderately (about three times a week) were better at fending off influenza than those who did not exercise at all, or exercised only once a month.

But people who exercised frequently (more than three times a week), shared the same risks of contracting influenza as those who did not do any exercise. The study examined the data on the exercise habits of 24,656 people who had already died.

It stressed the importance of good personal hygiene, a healthy lifestyle and moderate exercise as a means of keeping influenza at bay, especially during the disease's seasonal outbreaks, or during an epidemic.

The report also advised people not to smoke if they want to enjoy the full benefits of exercise.