

Heartburn

Niamh Ni Charra, a fiddler with Riverdance, tells Patricia Weston that stretching before a performance helps keep tendonitis at bay

(Source: The Irish Times, Tues, June 19th 2007)

Are you fit?

I'd say I'm relatively fit. I don't have the same regime as the riverdancers but I do a lot of running around the stage so I have to be fit to perform.

What kind of a workout do you get when you perform?

I have to hold my violin between my chin and left shoulder and then the right shoulder does all the bow work. This can be really tough on my shoulders so they have to be very strong. It's an unnatural position and can be quite unbalanced and a strain for two and a half hours. I do lots of stretches beforehand to avoid tendonitis.

And I'm lucky we have a masseuse who comes with us on tour and I get regular shoulder massages, which are a great help.

What's your regime like at the gym?

It's not an intensive workout but I do about 15-20 minutes on a bike or cross-trainer. I never do anything high impact. Then I mostly work with free weights for my upper body. We have free access to a gym when we are on the road. When I'm at home in Dublin I walk everywhere.

Are you on any special diets?

I recently had the **York allergy test** done. It's a blood sample which tests for four allergies in the body. I discovered I'm mildly allergic to dairy and yeast so I've cut down on both recently. I don't take milk in tea anymore so I drink hot water with lemon or pu-erh tea and I've been drinking soya milk. It's just a matter of training your taste buds and I feel much better. I used to suffer a lot from heartburn and acid reflux. I don't consider myself on a diet; it's more of a case of making small changes.

Do you take supplements?

I take sea-green tablets which provide intestinal nutrients; they're like pro-biotics, which help with digestion.

Niamh is a fiddler with Riverdance which is running at the INEC, Killarney until June 23rd. For tickets contact, tel: 064-71555.

Patricia Weston's exercise prescription: Niamh needs to concentrate on keeping her whole body strong but particularly she also needs to strengthen her shoulder muscles to avoid injury when she's performing. Here are some handy shoulder toners that will give your upper body tone and definition for the summer. You'll need two dumbbells for these exercises and a bench to sit on.

Stand with your knees slightly bent and your legs hip distance. With your palms facing your body and the weights in your hands, touching and resting on your thighs. Lift the weights together to chin level then return. Repeat for