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Facts About Fitness: What You Need to Know About Getting and Staying Healthy and Fit

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Facts About Fitness: What You Need to Know About Getting and Staying Healthy and Fit

The Importance of Physical Fitness

One of the simplest and most effective ways to bring down blood glucose levels, cut the risk of cardiovascular disease, and improve overall health and well-being is physical fitness and exercise. Yet, in our increasingly sedentary world, where almost every essential task can be performed online, from the driver's seat, or with a phone call, exercising and being physically fit can be tough case to sell.

In reality, everyone should exercise, yet surveys show that only 30% of the United States adult population gets the recommended thirty minutes of daily physical activity, and 25% are not active at all.

Inactivity is thought to be one of the key reasons for the surge of type 2 diabetes in America, because inactivity and obesity promote insulin resistance and other factors that trigger other kinds of diseases. In 2003, the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism had published a study citing lack of exercise and physical fitness as key factors behind obesity and other serious diseases like diabetes.

The good news is that it is never too late to get moving, and exercise is one of the easiest ways to start controlling the onset of any kind of disease. For people who are already candidates for some serious diseases like diabetes and heart failure, exercise and physical fitness can improve your insulin sensitivity, lower your risk for heart disease, as well as promoting weight loss. Even if you do not lose weight, your investment in exercise is still paying off in reduced heart disease risk and better blood glucose control.

Moreover, exercise simply makes you feel better, both physically and mentally. Your energy level will rise and the endorphins released by your brain during exercise will boost your sense of well-being. The motivating factor here is that you should never give up before you really get started. You owe it to yourself to start exercising if you are not already and to keep exercising on a daily or frequent basis.

Getting Started

The first order of business with any exercise plan, especially if you are a "dyed-in-the-wool" couch potato, is to consult with your health care provider. If you have cardiac factors, your doctor may want to perform a stress test to establish a safe level of exercise for you.

Certain complications of some diseases will also dictate what type of exercise program you can take on. Activities like weightlifting, jogging or high-impact aerobics can pose a risk for people with diabetic retinopathy, due to the risk for further blood vessel damage and possible “retinal detachment.”

Health experts also contend that patients with severe peripheral neuropathy or PN should avoid foot-intensive, weight-bearing exercises, such as long-distance walking, jogging or step aerobics and opt instead for low-impact activities like swimming, biking, and rowing.

If you have conditions that make exercise and physical fitness a challenge, your provider may refer you to an exercise physiologist who can design a fitness program for your specific needs.

If you are already active in sports or work out regularly, it will still benefit you to discuss your regular routine with your doctor.

The best exercise plan should include both cardiovascular and weight training exercises. This helps burn calories and increase the muscle to fat ratio that will increase your metabolism and make it easier for you to either gain or lose weight.

If you have never worked out before you should build your exercise program gradually. Doing it too much for the first time can strain your muscles or worse yet, cause an injury. Endurance isn't built in a day – it takes repetition over time.

The bottom line is that physical fitness and exercise should not have to be a rigid activity and need not feel like a ‘work out.’ Yes, you can join a gym and have a regular work out routine. But, if that isn't to your liking your exercise can be as simple as a brisk nightly or morning neighborhood walk, walking the dog, playing basketball with your kids or simply taking the stairs instead of the elevator. The important thing is that you **keep moving**. Every little bit really helps.

Planning Your Fitness Schedule

Planning a fitness program should not be a complicated procedure that requires a degree in physical education. As long as you are aware of your own physical condition, the goals you want to reach and the exercises that fit well into your life, you should have no problem planning a simple fitness schedule that gets you where you want to go.

All too often people are afraid to go out on their own without an exercise trainer, but often trainers plan routines that are inconvenient or involve exercises that you just plain hate. Taking control of your fitness program frees you from time crunches and dreaded routines, so step right up and learn how to plan the perfect fitness schedule for you!

The first thing you consider should be your goals in a fitness program. If you are seeking to lose weight, your routine will be different from someone who is trying to lower cholesterol or train for a 5K simply because different goals require different approaches. Trying to train for a race while you are still twenty pounds overweight will only result in frustration, because your body wants to deal with the excess weight first, and then build the endurance you need for a long-distance run.

Maybe you have more than one goal that you want to accomplish. If that's the case, consider which one is the most important and whether multiple goals can be achieved with the same workout program. Some goals can go hand in hand, such as training for a 5K and increasing your aerobic capacity. Goals that are similar in nature are much more likely to be accomplished with one program than are two goals that are vastly different.

If your goals don't parallel each other so well, identify your primary objective and focus on that. Secondary goals can wait and may even become easier when the primary reason is accomplished. Whatever the scenario may be, figure out what you want from your fitness program and then plan accordingly.

When you want to accomplish weight loss, whether five pounds or fifty, you will need to plan a fitness schedule with at least four days of cardiovascular activity, incorporate strength training, and eat a healthy diet that is low in calories, fat and sodium. Weight loss can be a challenge and requires a different mindset than training for an athletic event or focusing on lowering blood sugar. You must stay encouraged even on the days when you don't see change.

To see consistent weight loss, you should count on at least four days of cardiovascular activity and three to four days of strength training. The more effort you put into your program, the faster you will see results. Choose aerobic exercises that you enjoy to make working out more pleasant. If you hate spinning then you're really not going to enjoy four hours of spinning class weekly.

People who prefer to exercise alone may choose not to use a gym or to go during off-hours, while others may seek out the busiest times in order to have the most social contact during exercise. It's important to choose what fits you best, not what your mom thinks or what all the magazines are saying. For strength training, plan to spend time in the weight room at the gym or else purchase your own weights for use at home.

Once you've identified activities that fit you, take out your daily planner and assess your schedule to find free time. Maybe you can do any hour of power-walking a couple of days during the week and take an aerobics class on the weekend. Figure out what will work best with your schedule but remember to factor in a couple of free days. One of the most important parts of a fitness routine is flexibility – if your plan isn't flexible, you won't stick with it.

For fitness plans that aimed at training for an event, the best way to start is by figuring out how much time is left before the event. Ideally this should be at least two months to allow adequate preparation time depending on your fitness level. If you run on a regular basis and have participated in 5K races, you may want to challenge yourself by running a 10K. When the distance is doubled, one of the best ways to calculate preparation time is to double the time frame for training. If you would normally train six weeks for a 5K, train twelve weeks for a 10K. Allowing your body to gain strength and endurance gradually is easier on the system than waiting until four weeks before race day and forcing yourself to run a wildly accelerated training schedule.

Perhaps you just want to increase your aerobic capacity or tone up an area of the body. Improving your body's performance is best done slowly to allow yourself enough time to adjust and recover from your workouts. Plan to spend at least 45 minutes four to five days weekly working on your aerobic endurance or muscle tone. Muscle builds itself best when it has adequate time to heal, so factor in enough rest days.

In terms of building your aerobic endurance, you should plan to allow eight to twelve weeks for measurable improvement (though you may be able to tell a difference before then). Body toning, though, can be much quicker – some areas, such as the legs and buttocks, will respond very quickly and show improvement within three to four weeks. Solid muscle, however, will take anywhere from six weeks to ten weeks to begin to show.

By taking control of your fitness plan and personalizing it to your own needs, you can make your exercise routine work twice as well. That means your body will be stronger and leaner in half the time as otherwise. Having a healthy, beautiful body is what making your fitness schedule is all about.

Lifetime Fitness: On Your Way to a Healthier You

Many people end up abandoning perfectly good fitness programs and weight-loss regimens before they even lace up their sneakers.

Why? Because in a world filled with fast food, instant messaging, and five-second disease-tracking devices, anything without a quick payoff goes against the grain of the typical American instant gratification ethic. While it would be nice to actually drop inches in just a few days like what most miracle ads proclaim, managing weight and losing weight through physical fitness is a slow and steady process that takes time and commitment.

Setting weight management goals for yourself can be a good motivator. Gradual weight loss, for those people who wish to shed some extra pounds, is usually the safest way. This is why health and fitness experts have come up with the idea of lifetime fitness in order to teach people to set realistic goals. These lifetime fitness programs generate dietary regimens that cut your normal calorie consumption for your weight by 500 to

1,000 per day, so you will be burning the same amount with exercise. This will definitely encourage steady and healthy weight loss.

Lifetime fitness teaches you how to maintain a physically fit body and at the same time enjoy and live a happy, contented life. It gives you the chance to strike a balance between the two (exercise and diet), and make exercise, be it team sports, cycling or walking, something you will truly enjoy.

Lifetime fitness embodies the concept that making a long-term healthy lifestyle change is essential to keeping the pounds off once they are gone. To know more of the advantages and benefits that lifetime fitness can bring, here are some facts that you need to know:

1. Lifetime fitness programs offers you the most comprehensive and wide-ranging fitness and health services; programs that provide you the right methods in maintaining your health, building up and encouraging your fitness competence, as well as taking care of your family's physical fitness.
2. Because the goal of lifetime fitness is to provide you with long-term achievements as far as physical fitness is concerned, these programs utilize numerous fitness equipments that will tone and manage your health and the different parts of your body. They offer cardiovascular exercise equipment as well as full featured sports facilities.
3. Lifetime fitness programs and centers also provide nutritional products, such as food supplements that will aid in the formation of good blood cells and tissues thereby making your body at its pink of health.
4. Lifetime fitness centers and programs also provide you with up-to-date fitness magazines that do not only give substantial information about fitness and health but inspirational stories as well. These articles will give you an insight on how to make you life balance and how to live a life that is healthy and fit.

Indeed, staying fit and healthy can be a long and winding road and there will be times when you may find your enthusiasm waning. Nevertheless, with the comprehensive programs provided by lifetime fitness plans, you will be able to stay focused and keep on track going in the right direction for a healthier you.

Workout Clothes for Comfort and Style

When it comes to working out, looking good isn't the main priority. Fitness is about challenging your body to be stronger and better, so worrying about how you look is superficial to your ultimate goal. Your exercise clothes still matter, though, just not for the typical reason.

In olden days people worked out in whatever old thing was handy, regardless of what the garment actually was. In the last ten years, however, clothing manufacturers have made surprising strides in creating workout clothes that are not only attractive but functional as well. Rather than getting sweaty in a cotton t-shirt, you can now choose to wear a moisture-wicking shirt that absorbs your body moisture as you work out so your skin stays comfortable.

Women no longer have to worry about breast strain during exercise thanks to the sports bras that support and enclose the breasts while absorbing moisture and preventing chafing. The choices for workout clothing now seem almost endless and it can be difficult to assess which pair of running pants is better than the other. This section will explain a few methods for picking out the perfect workout outfit for you.

Pants/Shorts: Think about your needs first. Do you need a pocket for your keys or identification? If so, many manufacturers make clothes that feature small pockets that zip up to prevent your items from falling out. What about your preferences? Do you like pants that fit your legs closely or loose, sweatpants-type trousers? Consider your own personal likes and dislikes.

The best type of exercise pants and shorts are those with an elastic waist to prevent any mishaps with waistbands. Material should be flexible with an absorbent quality to remove sweat from your skin. If you prefer shorts, the fabric should fit comfortably between your legs so you don't experience any chafing.

Shirts: Plain cotton t-shirts are fine for days when you're not so concerned about moisture remaining near your skin (i.e. hot or chilly days) but the latest offerings of high-tech workout shirts not only suck the moisture away from you but it works overtime to keep your body properly ventilated. Look for fabrics that have some stretch to allow you maximum comfort during exercise.

Sports bras: The best sports bras being made now are multi-taskers: they wick away moisture, keep your upper body cool, provide comfort and support for breasts and don't dig in or make you uncomfortable. Even better, clothing manufacturers have finally caught on to the fact that women don't come in regular sizes only. Many lines offer half sizes to provide the perfect fit for maximum comfort. Additionally larger sizes are becoming more readily available for larger-breasted women.

Underwear: Believe it or not, lines of sports underwear are being marketed to the everyday athlete. The underwear is made from a unique moisture-wicking fabric that has a snug fit and comes in multiple styles. For exercisers who prefer to remain especially dry, this is probably a good choice.

Jackets and windbreakers: Look for styles that zip in the front rather than pulling overhead, which can be difficult to manage while running or walking. Clothing should be made from soft breathable fabric that reduces moisture while providing warmth for the body. The best styles will have both inside and outside pockets for keys, identification and more. Newer jackets have storage pockets on the arms for MP3 players and Ipods. A recent trend in outdoor sportswear and fitness clothing is treating clothes with

Scotchgard® to increase the repellence of water and keep the wearer drier than ever before. Most high-end retailers will carry water-repellant workout wear but the trend is filtering down to lower markets as well.

Socks: The right socks are an essential part of any workout. Exercising without a protective layer between your foot and the shoe can lead to irritation and strain on the foot. Newer socks cut down on the amount of moisture on your foot and often have extra padding in strategic places to help support the feet better than ever. Some lines of socks are created to correct specific problems like over-pronation, though these tend to be more expensive. The typical cotton socks are acceptable but they must fit your foot comfortably and not irritate or allow any sliding.

Workout gear has advanced light-years away from the spandex of the eighties and today's exercisers should take advantage of the innovations that can make fitness more comfortable and appealing.

Motivators for Success

Keeping yourself motivated during a fitness program can be challenging, even for the most experienced exercisers. Working out can get dull and your routine can seem endless when you've been on the same route forever. Avoid the pitfalls of discouragement and disenchantment by planning ways to reward yourself for a job well done.

This is the only body you're going to have, so you must take care of it to have the best life possible. You need to follow a regular workout program but it shouldn't be a punishment or something you have to force yourself to do. That's why it's important to build in regular rewards to maintain your motivation.

The best forwards to incorporate into a fitness program are ones that do not involve candy or any kind of food. A common method of "treating" yourself or making yourself better after a tough day is to buy a candy bar or box of cookies because "you deserve it." Nobody deserves 300 extra calories to get rid of! Calorie-laden treats are not the way to motivate yourself, because those kind of "rewards" will only involve more exercise later on down the road. Instead, sit down and make a list of activities, music and books you enjoy. Choose the things that appeal to you the most – try to have a variety of small, medium and large rewards to correspond with small, medium and large accomplishments.

If your goal is to lose weight, then plan appropriate incentives for smaller goals. If you wait until you've lost 20 pounds to give yourself a pat on the back, then the journey seems much harder. Plan to give yourself some kind of reward for every five pounds lost - buy a new CD or a DVD of a recently released movie.

Another method is to keep track of how many calories you burn each day and when the total reaches 3500, reward yourself by buying a magazine off the newsstand that you normally wouldn't purchase. Incentives for your mind and soul are better for you than rewards for the stomach. When your goal is simply to increase fitness and build muscle strength, set up reward points for lifting or pressing heavier weights, for running two miles instead of one, and for being able to exercise for longer periods of time. Use the same type of incentives – magazines, books and music. Simply the knowledge that you will reward yourself can make workouts feel easier.

Exercisers who partner with friends or family to reach goals can use this method with a slight variation. Each person should write down his or her own reward ideas – things that you would like to receive as a gift to yourself for caring for your body through fitness. Partners should then exchange lists and whenever one person reaches a goal, the partner chooses one of the items from the list to reward the accomplishment. This introduces an element of surprise into the routine and can encourage you to press on to more accomplishments in order to earn the incentives you like the most.

An important note to keep in mind is that incentives should match the size of the accomplishment. Buying yourself a new piece of expensive jewelry in return for losing a few pounds will lead either to dissatisfaction with your other incentives or bankruptcy, since you buy more and more jewels. Instead of going overboard on smaller incentives, reward yourself with an item that you like and enjoy but rarely buy or take yourself to a movie (but skip the concessions stand).

If you meet a mid-size goal like running five miles when your ultimate goal is ten, buy some new fitness clothes or take a day off work to relax. Accomplishing your ultimate goals calls for the biggest, splashiest incentive you want. If you have worked and sweated your way out of thirty pounds or more, take a spa weekend to pamper your beautiful new body! Or if you prepared for a marathon for months and then completed the 26 miles, take a mini-vacation to a nearby scenic retreat and spend your time relaxing and reveling in your accomplishment.

Keeping your motivation high can be challenging with the demands of everyday life. Adding incentives to encourage you along the way will not only help you reach your goals faster but will make your life a little sweeter as well.

Top 5 Fitness Myths

You've heard the stories: weight training makes women look like Arnold Schwarzenegger, exercising on an empty stomach burns more calories, and more. While some fitness myths make sense on the surface, deeper examination proves these stories are simply made up and have little or no basis in reality. Let's tackle five of the most common myths and check out the real story behind them.

1. No pain, no gain – Perhaps the most common myth out there is this one that says

if you don't feel pain when you exercise, you're not doing it right. The truth is absolutely opposite: exercise done right should never be painful and professional trainers recommend that you stop your workout at the first sign of pain. The logic behind "no pain, no gain" says that you can't expect good results without sacrificing something – twisted at best, downright sadistic at worst. Exercise should be something you enjoy or else you very quickly become disillusioned and drop it entirely. While an intense workout may create slight discomfort, it should never get to the point where you are in actual pain.

2. Training with weights bulks women up – Few women want to look like professional bodybuilders, so this myth scares thousands of female exercisers away from weights every day despite scientific evidence to the contrary. The physiological differences between male and female bodies decree that men have a higher percentage of muscle throughout the body; thus men tend to increase bulk with weight lifting. On the other hand, female bodies have a higher percentage of fat to assist with childbearing and have less muscle to build and bulk up. Weight training for women is aimed at producing stronger muscles that can take more stress and bounce back better than ever.

3. Exercising on an empty stomach burns more calories – This one seems like it should make sense since exercise burns calories and an empty stomach has no calories to burn. It seems like you would be ahead of the game! Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. Your body needs energy to run, so when you exercise on an empty stomach the body has to find fuel somewhere else. The body tries to provide energy while looking for it at the same time and can get overwhelmed, resulting in the risk of dizziness or even fainting in extreme situations. The smartest choice is to have a small snack about ten to fifteen minutes before working out. Carbohydrates are the best source of energy, so have a small slice of toast or a banana.

4. Crunches are the best way of firming up the stomach – Too many videos and articles send the message that hundreds of crunches are the best way to correct a jelly belly but fail to take into account that most saggy abs are because of excess fat, not weak muscles. Simply doing crunches alone strengthens the abdominal muscles but doesn't address the layer of fat over the muscles. You may see your stomach appear to grow larger since the muscles are gaining strength underneath the fat layer. The best strategy for getting firm abs is simple: burn fat and strengthen abdominal muscles at the same time. By using a two-pronged approach, fat that covers muscles is burned and the muscles are firmed at the same time, accomplishing your goal and giving you strong, sleek abdominal muscles.

5. Protein will help build muscles – Protein can do great things for your health but it won't help you increase your muscle strength. Too much protein in your diet can lead to unintended health risks such as kidney strain or dehydration. Extra protein also packs extra calories into your diet that can result in extra pounds – definitely not what you want. The best source of fuel for weight lifting is carbohydrates – easily digestible by the body, carbs provide fast, consistent energy for the body and allow you to continue lifting weights longer. That alone is what builds strength, not the specific kind of food you eat. Provide your body with the right kind of energy to use and you'll be able to build muscle

better.

There are many more myths about health and fitness, but the best defense against false information is education. When you are confident that you know the right plan for your body, spotting myths become easy.

Fitness Center: How to Choose the Fitness Center of Your Life

In reality, you really do not have to spend a lot of money on expensive health club or fitness centers memberships, treadmills, or the latest fitness gadget to get moving. However, some people find that if they make a monetary investment, they are more likely to follow through on fitness.

Fitness centers are, basically, built to provide people the proper fitness equipments, trainings and other devices needed to keep an individual physically fit. However, not all fitness centers are created equal. In fact, there are fitness centers that require their members to sign some contracts, which in the end will not be easy to cancel. Hence, it is important to know the characteristics of the fitness center that will work best for you.

Here is a list of some tips that you can use:

1. Make your mind up on things that you need

Before you choose a fitness center, you should first know what your needs are as far as physical fitness is concerned. This will determine the kind of fitness center that you will join.

For example, if you are more into sports fitness than activities like aerobics, then it would be better to choose a fitness center that has sports facilities and not just treadmills.

2. Do not forget to shop around

It may sound so cliché-ish but it really pays to shops around when choosing fitness centers to compare the prices, charges and the facilities available in a health club.

In this way, you get to choose the best and most affordable fitness center you, as well as the one most suited to your particular needs.

3. Consider your budget

Make sure that joining a fitness center fits into your budget before you sign on the dotted line. Remember, it is another monthly payment you will have to make.

And while it is important that you want to work out your body, you do not want to go into debt by doing so. There are other options.

4. Know where your money goes

By the same token, if you do sign up for a fitness center, make sure you know where your money is going each month and that you are getting – and taking advantage of – everything you have paid for.

If it makes you sweat and lose those fats and cellulites, fine!

5. Be aware of the physical upkeep of the center that you enroll in.

Make sure that the fitness center that you have chosen is clean, properly ventilated and complete with all the amenities that you need.

Be sure also that the equipment that the fitness center has are all in good working condition. Never use fitness equipments that appear to be worn out or in poor repair. This will cause more harm than good.

All of these things boil down to the fact that a fitness center you choose may not be the perfect fitness center. What matters most is that it is good enough to make you feel comfortable working out there and to generate good results for your body.

Guidelines in Finding A Fitness Club

You would like to join a fitness club but there are so many choices! Fitness clubs are effective motivators. They should motivate us and not frustrate us. Before you choose on a fitness club, make sure that it suits your needs and goals. And before you do that, you should first learn and decide on what is your priority. By then, you will know what you really need in a fitness club. Here are some guidelines you can consider in choosing a fitness club that is best for you:

1. Where is it located?

The location is the first thing that you should consider when finding a fitness club. If the club is far from your home, you will just have another excuse not to work out. It is best to find a facility that is near your home.

2. Are the employees friendly and nice? Will they be able to help you reach your goals?

Make sure that the instructor has the necessary experience to work with you. The instructor should be a certified professional that can work with you safely and effectively. Your instructor should also know if you have physical limitations or you may

find an instructor that is well trained to work with you. You can also check the age of the instructor especially if it is one factor for your motivation and learning. The staff should also be helpful, friendly and professional. You can also ask the services they offer and find what is important for you. Some facilities have their own dietician and physical therapists that can offer services for you.

3. What kind of programs does it offer?

Find time to see what programs are there for you and check if they suit your interests. Do they offer group classes? Choose the facility that offers the classes you really like. You can do a trial class to check it out if you want.

4. Are the facilities and equipments good and will they be available anytime that is most convenient for you?

Check if the equipments are enough for all members. Otherwise, you will waste your time falling in line and waiting for your turn. Also make sure that the facility is open during the time you are most likely to do work outs and exercises.

5. Is the entire facility well maintained, clean and safe for you?

Machines and other training facilities should be in clean and in good order. If you see a lot of "out of order" signs, it could be something to think about. Modern equipments are safer and more comfortable to use, so you may also want to consider that. Are the floors cleaned regularly to avoid accidents? Is there enough room for everyone? Also check if the facility is located in a place away from danger, consider also if the location is well lit.

6. Are the members of the club friendly and can they be your friends?

The fitness club is also a venue for social interaction. Take time to drop by and meet the members of the club before you enroll. Other members can be your buddies in the near future and should be considered.

7. What is the schedule of classes and will they be convenient for you?

Find out what classes are offered at a specific time and consider if you will be available at the schedules given.

8. How much would it cost you?

It is important to know the monthly membership fee and what it covers. Some fitness clubs have hidden charges and you should be keen in checking that. Check if they have promotions or discounts and do they offer services at an extra fee. It is also important to know how long the club has been and how often they increase rates.

9. How is it different from other fitness clubs?

Don't just stick into one fitness club. Try to visit as many facilities as you can and make a comparison. Then you can just narrow down your choices to the facilities that met your needs and priorities.

10. What do people say about it? Take your time to gather feedback from other members. Ask them what they can say about the club and let them tell you about the experiences with the facility.

Choosing a fitness club is just like shopping on the best shirt for you. Do not be pressured and do not try to contact them right away. You can take your time to review and gather enough information if you are still not sure which one to choose. Once you have made your choice, enjoy and make the most out of it.

Two Popular Gym Options Today

LA Fitness

LA fitness is a conglomeration of different fitness centers in the United States. Since its inception in 1984, LA fitness, as the sole owner of the different fitness clubs in the U.S., has continuously operated and managed the different sports clubs in Arizona, Georgia, Florida, California, Pennsylvania, New York, Texas, Connecticut, Washington, and New Jersey. It continues to grow and expand its territory as it plans to have 135 additional fitness centers and sports clubs in the country. It aimed to operate new techniques and services for their new markets.

The best thing about LA fitness is that its management and staff are committed to bring forth the kind of service that their clients deserve. They provide their clients with facilities that are totally way above the rest. Like any fitness centers, LA fitness has its aerobic programs as the main attraction on their program. They have also incorporated the concepts of yoga, indoor cycling, aqua aerobics, mat pilates, and kickboxing among others. They have also employed the utilization of sports activities as part of their health and fitness programs.

The 24 Hour Fitness Path

The Twenty Four Hour fitness center is like your one stop shop to everything about fitness and your well-being. Imagine it as the Walmart of the fitness industry. Twenty Four Hour fitness centers have over three hundred clubs located throughout the US and as their name implies, they are open around the clock, for twenty four hours. There is no long term contract to sign up in. You have the option to pay monthly, but you are offered a complete personal training package that suits your body type, body weight and built so you are ensured with a service that is truly personalized.

Twenty Four Hour fitness center gives you the option to choose the specific type of club that you desire. The active club involves a group exercise as well as free weights and cardio machines to work off that fat. The sport club also includes everything in the active club but with additions such as basketball, heated pools and whirlpool. The super-sport club also includes the amenities found those in the active club and the sport club but with more additions such as massages, a sauna as well as a steam room. The ultra sport club is the works. It includes most of the amenities found in the active, sport and super sport club, plus a day spa, courts for racquetball as well as an executive locker room.

Best Gym Machines for Overall Fitness

When you step into the gym for the first time, it can be overwhelming to see the variety of machines for you to choose from. How do you tell which machine is the best one to meet your needs? The smartest thing to do is to ask an employee or arrange for a one-time session with one of the gym's personal trainers so that you can walk around and get a feel for the gym and understand the purpose of each machine.

Using exercise machines as part of your regular workout schedule can be a fantastic way to mix things up and challenge your muscles so they don't get accustomed to the same thing. You can also use machines like rowers and treadmills to get in your aerobic exercise and cut down on stress on the joints.

Despite the excess of workout machines at the gym, there are a few machines that stand out from the crowd. These machines allow you to burn more calories and fat while strengthening and shaping your muscles, and go above and beyond the performance of many others. If you're unfamiliar with these machines, ask a trainer to demonstrate for you at the gym. Most of these aren't complex so you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out how to use them. Use one or more of these machines in your workout program two to three times per week and be amazed at the change in your body.

Treadmill

Perhaps the king of all gym machines, the treadmill is so much more than just a walking machine. Most of the latest models come with features like incline adjustment, arm tools and more to help maximize your workout time. A digital panel at the front will tell you important information like completed distance, calories burned and other facts. Many treadmills offer preplanned computerized workouts for you to choose from. The best of these is a workout that challenges you by changing the incline, speed and stride at different intervals throughout the workout.

Using one of these treadmills can increase your calorie burn up to twice what a normal walking workout would burn. Vary the routine by adding your own arm movements when possible. Raise arms overhead up and down to the pace of your walk or reach

forward with alternating arms. This can boost your heart rate higher and increase your total calorie burn.

Lateral Pulldown

One of the best weight machines in the gym today, the lateral pulldown machine works your arms, core and back in one simple movement. Stand at the front of the machine with your feet about shoulder width apart and a handle in each hand. Slowly bring your arms backward as the weights pull on the bands. Do not let your arms go back further than your shoulders or else you risk injury. Slowly pull the bands forward and down as you feel the effort in your back muscles and core. Repeat for 3 sets of 20 repetitions.

Be sure that the weight is manageable and ask for help if not. Lat pulldowns can seriously shape up your back and core with just three workouts throughout the week. Your calorie burn is modest but as you replace more fat with muscle, your daily metabolic rate will rise since muscle requires more fuel than fat.

Rowing Machine

Don't overlook this humble piece of equipment that looks a little bit like training apparatus for beginning skiers. The rowing machine can powerfully develop your back, arms, legs, and core with just four workouts during the week. As you position yourself in the seat, make sure you sit erect and keep your abdominal muscles tight. Grasp the handles and pull back at the same time you push off with your legs. Maintain good posture during your workout to burn more calories. Keep rowing for twenty to thirty minutes (depending on your fitness level) and make sure to stretch your entire body after the workout. Use the rower three to four times a week and you'll begin to see major changes within your body in just a few weeks.

Be Lean, Mean: Tips for Buying Fitness Equipment Machines

Don't feel like joining a gym. I don't blame you. Many of us would far rather do our working out in the comfort and privacy of our own homes. And there is really no reason to join a gym to remain fit, healthy and flexible.

Truth be told, you don't really even need to purchase expensive exercise equipment. The best exercise is one that you are going to stick with and do daily, be it push-ups, stretches, jumping jacks or the regular jogging or the much tamer walking.

However, there are people who prefer to work out using fitness equipment in their own homes. And if you are one of them, the following are a few basic and important things to consider when buying home exercise equipment.

Do not believe what you see and hear

At least not everything. Be sure to assess all those claims exercise equipment marketers declare in their advertisements. It is hard to accept as true, for example, statements that assure you that you will lose several pounds in as little as seven days or that you will decrease your pants size in one month. Even with the assistance of dietary supplements, it is not possible to accomplish changes as major as these in just a week, much less days.

Fat Burner is a No Burner

Be skeptical about claims that say you will be able to burn a tremendous amount of fat in a specific area of your body, such as the hips, thighs or waist just by applying a specific type of ointment or lotion or using a specific piece of equipment. The only sure way to burn all that fat way is by changing what you eat.

The only testimonial that counts is yours!

Before and after pictures of people who claim that they were able to lose weight because of using such and such equipment may or may not be true. If ever they are, their experience is purely personal and that is no assurance that your unique body weight, body make-up will also undergo the same change they went through.

Read the fine print

It is always advisable to read the fine print of anything. Though you believe that the fitness equipment you are planning to purchase is a good one, reading the fine print really wouldn't hurt as it may say that you also have to decrease your calorie intake and not just rely on what the machine could do for you.

Do the math

There are advertising statements that say you could pay off the fitness equipment in a number of easy payments or by paying a mere thirty nine ninety five a month. Do not forget to inquire about shipping and handling costs and include that in your calculation. Also, add-on the required sales tax, delivery fees, set-up fees. Know all the details before you purchase.

Guarantee the warranty

Do they offer any guarantee or warranty. If they don't, don't purchase. If they do, get the details. Also, be sure to read the fine print. If it is a 30 day money back guarantee, make sure that you keep track of the days if you think you might want to return the item. And, of course, you must file your receipt in a save place. Also, be sure to fill in the warranty as soon as you get it and send it in or it is useless.

Call Customer Service

Make sure you contact their customer service hotline. Usually, they have toll-free numbers that you must be able to easily contact as well as a customer service representative who must be glad to be able to take your call and answer thoroughly all or any questions you may have about their products and services.

Fitness for Free

Can't afford a gym membership? Or perhaps you've tried the gym thing and found it simply bored you to tears. People are forking out hundreds of dollars per year for gym memberships that rarely get used.

For the millions of people that choose to not go the typical gym route, there are actually hundreds of available options for working out in someplace other than your living room and many of these options are absolutely free. There are few things that fire up a mood like a free deal, so check out some of these ideas and let the enthusiasm take you right out your front door and into a fitness world that won't cost you a dime!

Put your tax dollars to work.

Paying taxes can be a fairly depressing business, especially since you can't be sure of ever seeing that money again. The good news is that you can get a return on your local dues by checking out the recreation facilities offered by your county or municipality. The majority of tax-levying counties across the country actually do put some of that money into services for citizens. Call your local Department of Sports and Recreation to find out about the kind of resources offered in your area.

At the very least you should expect to find tennis courts and a swimming pool. Put in an hour of laps a few times during the week and you've got yourself a nice body-shaping tool. Tennis courts frequently double as basketball courts, so find a friend to play a set or a game of horse. Larger counties may offer more sophisticated services that include weight rooms, fitness centers, walking tracks, and more, so it's important to find out exactly what's available for your needs. Nearly all county recreation services are free but if there is a fee, it will be minimal. After all, that's what all those taxes are for!

Surf the Internet, not the ocean.

When your routine needs some variety, surf the Internet to find a free one-day pass to a local gym or fitness studio. Plenty of chain gyms do this to entice potential customers into signing on with them, but even smaller mom-and-pop centers are offering passes. Do a fast Internet search to find printable passes for most gyms. While you can't make a regular habit out of using free passes, it can be a nice way to mix things up and surprise your body.

Pretend to be a kid again.

You probably have your old bike stowed away somewhere around your house, so why not pull it out, dust it off, and take a ride? Bicycling is a fantastic way to burn calories and shape up the lower half of your body, especially if you ride in hilly areas that can surprise the muscles. If your bike needs some fixing up, try to do it yourself or ask a friend.

For those of you who gave away the bike along with the bong, go to a couple of yard sales to find one secondhand. You can typically tell right away if a bike is in good condition or not, plus at a yard sale you can bargain with the seller to get a better price. While this might call for a small initial investment, biking on public streets is totally free and gives you a great workout. Remember to take safety precautions by always wearing a helmet and attaching reflective safety tape to your body if you ride at night.

Go to the dogs.

This can be a cool double play if you handle your cards right. Look up dog groomers and dog boarders in your phone book, and then make some calls to find out if anyone needs a part-time or contract dog-walker. When you find a job, you'll be getting fit and getting paid at the same time. Not only is that wildly cool but it's actually paying you to exercise. What could be sweeter?

Check out the library.

If you haven't been your local public library in a while, it's not the same place you remember from childhood. Modern library science has caught up with the rest of the world and introduced compact discs, videotapes and even DVDs to the bookshelves. Many libraries now offer exercise videos and DVDs for checkout, so cruise over to your own local place and have a chat with the friendly librarian. Checkout periods can vary from as few as three days to as much as three weeks, so it's important to use whatever tapes and DVDs you check out as soon as possible. Having to return an exercise tape you didn't even look at can be discouraging, so make a point to work out with your temporary tape as soon as possible.

Flexibility for Everyone!

When you think about flexibility you probably imagine a yogi twisting his body into some impossible and slightly repellent yoga pose. In truth flexibility is much more than performing complicated yoga moves and should be a part of daily life for everyone. Having a flexible body means being protected from injury and an increased ability to bounce back from physical stress.

Working on improving your flexibility is not complicated and doesn't even take up a lot of time: just ten minutes a day can vastly improve your body's flexibility and improve your mood in minutes!

Begin by assessing your body's current state of flexibility. Sit on the floor with your legs straight and move them apart until your feet are approximately twelve inches away from each other. Lean forward and place your hands as far as you can comfortably reach. Note the position or mark it with an object, and then eyeball the distance from your maximum reach to your feet. If your maximum reach is six inches or less from your feet, that's great! You can still use some work but you've already got a great start! A reach between six inches and your knees means you're okay; anything that doesn't pass the knees is ready for some serious work.

Don't get discouraged, though: flexibility is one of the easiest and most pleasant physical activities to incorporate into your daily life. You won't get sweaty or smelly doing stretches and the feeling of relaxation after a good stretch is priceless.

Your Plan for Flexibility

Start by choosing a certain time to set aside every day strictly for your stretching and flexibility training. One of the best times is in the morning right after waking up. Your muscles are ready for some action and stretching before your day begins can help you start the day in a calm frame of mind. Bedtime stretching is also a good option since the moves relax you and prepare you for a good night's rest. If you are prone to exhaustion at the end of the day, though, you may be tempted to put off stretching at bedtime. Identify the time of day that will work best for you and then stick to it.

Next you should locate a place where you can stretch in peace and make it known that you are not to be disturbed during your flexibility training. You will probably want a yoga mat to use unless the floor is carpeted. Create an area that appeals to you and draws you in – if you are turned off by your surroundings, stretching won't seem so appealing.

Here is a simple sequence that stretches all major areas of the body and offers plenty of room for modification. All stretches should be held for a minimum of ten seconds and should never be pulsed or pressed beyond your comfort level. If you feel any pain, stop immediately and consult a medical professional. Perform this sequence at least once a day for two weeks and you will begin to see the difference in your body's flexibility.

1. Begin by standing tall with your feet about shoulder-width apart and your arms resting comfortably at your sides. Take a deep breath and raise your arms above your head as you inhale. Exhale as you bring your arms downward. Repeat this movement three more times for a total of four.
2. Bring your right arm up and bend your forearm towards your back. Take your left hand and place it at the elbow and gently press back and hold to stretch the tricep. Repeat the movement with the opposite arm.
3. Now bring your right arm across your chest as though you were hugging yourself.

Use your left hand to gently press the upper arm against the chest and hold. Switch arms and repeat.

4. Raise both arms over your head, lace your fingers together with your palms facing up and press toward the ceiling to stretch the biceps, spine, and abdominal muscles.

5. Bend at the waist and let your arms hang down as far as possible and hold. If you can touch your toes, gently push yourself to touch the floor. This stretches the back and shoulder area.

6. Drop to your hands and knees, lower your head slightly, and pull in your abdominal muscles as you round your back like a cat and hold. This stretches the spine and works the core muscles.

7. Lie facedown on the floor with your palms facing down near shoulder-height. Gently lift your upper body up as far as is comfortable for you and hold. This stretches the abdominal muscles and trapezoid muscle.

8. Sit on the floor with both legs extended in front of you and feet slightly more than shoulder-width apart. Sit forward as far as possible, place your hands on the floor between your legs and hold. This stretches the spine and hamstring muscles.

9. Gently roll backwards until you are lying on your back. Bring one leg across your body as though you were crossing your legs, let the opposite knee support and gently press the leg back and hold, stretching the hamstring and gluteal muscles.

10. Finish by extending your legs straight in front of you, raising both your arms over your head and tensing your body from head to toe for a count of five. Release; then repeat. When you are finished, roll on your side and push yourself up from the floor.

Increasing Your Cardio Strength

Building cardiovascular strength and endurance should be a primary goal for all exercisers. When your cardiovascular system is toned and in good health, even the simplest everyday task becomes easier. The greater your aerobic capacity, the longer and harder you can work out, burning more and more calories. So how do you build this precious commodity and even your fitness odds?

The best way to begin is by assessing your current level of cardiovascular fitness. If you have a personal trainer, he or she can use professional testing equipment to determine the extent of your aerobic strength. For the rest of us without the benefit of personal trainers, here's a simple routine that help you identify your level of strength followed by some tips for cardio toning.

Begin by standing with your feet about shoulder-width apart and your arms resting

comfortably at your sides. Take a deep breath and begin walking briskly, swinging your arms gently. Continue this warm-up for about two minutes and then begin performing jumping jacks. Use both the arms and legs. Perform as many jumping jacks as possible for three minutes without resting. At the end of three minutes, stop movement and take your pulse.

Your ideal heart rate should be about 75-85% of your maximum heart rate. A very basic method of finding your MHR is to subtract your age from 220. If you are thirty-two years old, subtract 32 from 220. This equals 188. Seventy-five to eighty-five percent of 188 equal 144 to 160; thus your ideal heart rate for maximum cardiovascular conditioning is 144-160 beats per minute for a thirty-two-year-old adult. Remember that this is only a very basic formula and can only give you a general range. There are personal electronics available now that track your vital statistics as you exercise and have a digital screen to keep you aware of your body. You may want to consider investing in one of these tools if you are serious about getting the very best cardio conditioning possible.

Back to the MHR: if your heart rate was wildly above the upper ranges of 85%, you need to scale back your activity and work on building more strength without placing so much stress on the body. On the other hand, if your MHR was below 75%, that's a good indication your aerobic health is in good condition and you have a green light to work harder. Having a heart rate that's solidly within the seventy-five to eighty-five percent range indicates that you are at a comfortable stage with your aerobic strength and can increase activity slightly to build more capacity. Always remember, though, if you feel lightheaded or dizzy during a workout, stop moving immediately and rest until you feel better.

Building Aerobic Capacity through Exercise

These are simple routines to condition the cardiovascular system and increase your aerobic capacity without depending on complicated equipment or attending a gym class five times a week. Go with whatever method appeals most to you and you'll be much more likely to stick with it and build greater strength.

Lengthen Your Workouts

This is a simple trick that many people underestimate. By increasing your workout by fifteen minutes you can burn up to one hundred additional calories and give your metabolism a stronger boost as well as require your cardiovascular system to hang in there longer and increase capacity. If your typical workout lasts about thirty minutes, increase it to forty-five minutes three times per week. You should start to notice a difference within three weeks. Adding more time to every workout will bring results faster.

Get Wet to Build Strength

Swimming is one of the least appreciated workouts today. Few people understand exactly how challenging an underwater workout can be. Swimming requires you to learn

how to pace your breathing and rely on your aerobic capacity to support you when you are underwater and cannot take a breath. Since the water supports your weight and makes you more buoyant, you are able to work more of your muscles, thus requiring more air to drive your system. Start doing one swimming workout of thirty minutes twice weekly and you will feel a difference in less than three weeks. Most people are truly amazed at the changes in their bodies and breathing capacity when they add swimming as a regular workout.

Use the Arms to Increase Lung Power

If you are a dedicated walker or runner, this is one of the simplest changes you can make to your regular program and it doesn't even require equipment or special locations. Simply add arm movements as you move your legs. This works best for walkers, who move at a slower pace than runners and can more easily incorporate arm motions into the walk. Try raising your arms over your head for two beats and then back down. It may look funny but your heart rate will increase and start building the capacity in your lungs.

Cardiovascular Exercise versus Weight Training

All exercisers, whether beginners or old hands, will ask themselves at some point if they should switch to an all-cardio or all-weight training program. Trainers are asked this question every day in gyms across America and more curious folks write in to fitness columns to pose the query. Does it really matter if you do all-cardio or all-weights? The short answer to this question is yes, it does matter.

Cardiovascular exercise primarily focuses on developing and strengthening the cardiovascular system through aerobic training. This means strengthening your heart, lungs, and blood vessels so that they all work more efficiently, both together and individually. By training the body to meet higher and higher levels of aerobic endurance, you increase the efficacy of your system. This is a fantastic move to make your present life easier and more pleasant, but it's also a smart move to prepare for later life.

Research proves over and over again that adults who maintain a high level of fitness throughout early and middle life end up living fuller, more productive lives as seniors. That's in addition to living longer than people who don't exercise. The benefits of cardiovascular exercise are almost too numerous to list: lower blood pressure, lower 'bad' cholesterol and higher 'good', decreased incidence of heart attack and stroke, decreased risk of osteoporosis, overall decreased risk of most cancers, increased life span and more. Cardiovascular or aerobic exercise is the smartest choice around – or is it?

Weight training aims to strengthen the muscles by lifting weights. By increasing the overall strength of the muscles in the body, the support of the body is increased and allows for greater ease of living. Since the muscles connect to each other and all essentially hold up the skeleton, without them there would be no way to move to exercise. People who lift weights are shown to have many of the same characteristics as those who engage in cardiovascular exercise. Weight-lifters also experience a decreased risk of bone fractures since the weights help build bone through the resistance. Lifting weights is surely the best approach to fitness – right?

In reality, the number one way to achieve ultimate fitness in your life is to combine the two approaches of aerobic exercise and strength training to boost your health to the optimum level. The two methods, though targeting different systems, form a beautiful relationship that works together to develop and build all aspects of the body to create the strongest, healthiest body possible. Cardiovascular exercise strengthens the lungs and allows the body to build up stamina. Weight training uses that stamina to build muscles for longer periods of time. The muscles then act in their roles as support team for the skeleton and organs, and can work more efficiently. The increased efficiency of the body means that it can develop greater aerobic capacity through exercise – and you see how the cycle begins again. Cardio and strength training feed off each other to develop your best body ever.

The next question should be obvious: what's the best combination aerobic and strength training workout? The answer to this is swimming. Swimming is the ultimate aerobic conditioner as well as muscle builder. Thanks to the buoyancy you experience underwater, your muscles can concentrate more on working than on supporting your body. Doing all those laps, though, requires a great deal of aerobic stamina. Thus all of your body's systems get a thorough workout when you swim.

One recommended program is to swim a certain number of laps in the pool but on each lap, swim a different style. On your first lap, swim freestyle to get into the groove and warm your muscles. On your second lap, swim breaststroke. Do backstroke on the third. Rotate the strokes so that your muscles are continually surprised and challenged. Do this as your swimming workout four to five times a week and you will be amazed at the change in your body both in shape and in endurance.

The smart exerciser knows that there's no choosing between cardiovascular exercise and weight training. The best programs always incorporate a variety of the two to provide maximum development and strength. Start adding your own combination workouts to your schedule and be delighted as your body starts to truly reinvent itself.

Top 5 Cardio Activities

When you want to find the best cardio activity for you, consider your personal preferences as well as your body. If you hate getting hot and sweaty during a workout, then running is probably not for you. If you like trying new workouts that keep you

engaged and entertained, consider an instructor-led belly dancing class. People who prefer to exercise alone should probably just avoid the gym during busy hours. If you have bad joints, avoid high impact classes like step aerobics and kick boxing. Everyone is different, not just in personality but in body as well, and that can mean great things in terms of workouts.

There is a huge variety of exercises that burn serious calories and you're sure to find one that appeals to you. To burn fat and reshape your body, you can't beat cardiovascular exercise. Getting your heart pumping and boosting your metabolism is what cardio does best, and it's the only surefire way to lose weight and get rid of fat. Some cardiovascular activities burn more calories than others and speed up fat loss while reshaping the body, and that makes them good choices for people who are serious about losing weight and improving aerobic capacity. Looking at the top 5 cardiovascular activities, there is great variety while all maintaining the same purpose of burning major fat and calories.

Swimming and Water Aerobics

Swimming should be the king of all workouts for its user-friendly status and low stress on the body. If you fit in three 45-minute swimming workouts every week, you will see major changes in your body in just two to three weeks. Your body becomes buoyant in the water, meaning that it is supported by the water and does not have to depend on the muscles nearly as much. If you just stand still in the pool, your muscles will have very little to do, but when you start swimming at a brisk pace your muscles become involved with pushing your body through the water – not an easy task. That's why swimming burns so many calories; the muscles work almost twice as hard as in land workouts and torch up to three times as many calories. Challenge yourself by swimming one lap breaststroke, one lap backstroke, and still another lap butterfly. Freestyle is good but you burn far more calories when you mix it up and challenge the body to respond.

Water aerobics offer the same support as swimming but instead of propelling your body from one end of the pool to another you stand in place in the water and use the water's resistance to build muscle and burn calories. Water aerobics frequently use accessories for strengthening workouts but if you don't have any, don't worry! Just go to your pool and perform the same toning exercises that you would do in the gym. Squats, lunges, leg lifts – when done under water, these movements become more challenging and require muscles to work harder, resulting in a higher calorie. The best part is that the support of the water cuts the stress on joints and can help people with arthritis and other joint disorders to get exercise back in their lives.

Power Walking (at home)

A power walking life up to its name and requires you to put out a lot more power than a stroll around the block. In power walking, you swing your arms back and forth as you walk briskly – this helps to burn calories as well as propel you through your walk faster. Increasing the speed will boost your calorie burn even higher. An excellent variation for a power walking routine is to add arm movements a few days per week. As you walk

briskly, raise your arms overhead and bring back down to the pace of your walk. This can seriously raise your heart rate and increase your fat burn.

Power Walking (at the gym)

Power walking at the gym is as easy as hopping on the nearest programmable treadmill and setting off. If you are not sure how to program the treadmill, ask a trainer or knowledgeable friend to show you how. You should choose a walking route that includes inclines and changes to surprise and challenge your muscles. Most treadmills that offer these walking programs talk you through the route so that you are alarmed with the incline increases. Use the same variation from the home power walking and add arm movements to increase heart rate and calorie burn.

Belly Dancing

Belly dancing won't burn quite as many calories as swimming or power walking, but for sheer fun and novelty this workout can't be beat. Belly dancing has become wildly popular across the nation in the past few years and nearly all gyms offer at least one class for interested parties. You will work your hips, thighs and waistline in a typical class as well as increase your aerobic capacity. And who knows, your belly dancing skill might come in handy some day!

Ashtanga Yoga

The most physical form of yoga is Ashtanga yoga, which uses the same traditional yoga poses but incorporates powerful aerobic conditioning at the same time. You will move quickly and powerfully in a fast-paced routine that is led by a certified instructor who is experienced in moves that boost your heart rate and burn the calories. Ashtanga yoga is still relatively new in some places and it may be difficult to find a class at first, but more and more gyms are offering classes. You can find Ashtanga videos at stores nationwide, so you may want to consider having your own private session at home.

The 3 Most Common Workout Mistakes

When you invest the time in exercising, you want to see the best results possible but sometimes exercisers unknowingly handicap themselves by hidden mistakes. These errors are typically undiscovered until pointed out, which is why it is important to be aware of potential mistakes in order to avoid them. Let's discuss the most common mistakes that occur during workouts and how to avoid making them.

Poor Posture

This is probably the all-time worst offender. Bad posture while you exercise means that you're probably not getting the full benefit of your workout, and opens the door for pain and stiffness later. This is also referred to as "having proper alignment" and means

keeping your spine in the best position possible (typically a neutral stance with shoulders back and head held high).

When your body is out of alignment, it can prevent you from getting the most out of your exercise – poor alignment in abdominal crunches will not only give you a neck-ache but also work the wrong muscles and potentially bulk up your stomach instead of flattening it! Many trainers recommend imagining a string attached to the top of your head and pulling your body straight to help keep good posture.

Slumping and hunching over may give you some relief initially but standing up straight provides the best support for the body and feels most secure. If you need helping remembering to check your posture during your workout, write a note to yourself and put it in a pocket or attach it to a piece of workout equipment to jog your memory.

Wearing the Wrong Shoes or No Shoes At All!

Exercising without the proper footwear is only setting yourself up for future suffering! There is a reason why shoes are designated as being for running, walking, or cross-training, and it's not just to sucker you out of the most money. Each activity demands different things of your feet and the shoes are designed specifically to support the areas of the foot that undergo the most stress.

You won't feel any immediate effects from wearing walking shoes while running but in the long run some problems will surface. If you participate in a variety of sports and activities, the best choice is probably a cross-training shoe, which aims to support multiple areas of the foot.

Go to your local shoe store and when the salesperson asks if you need assistance, take him up on it! Describe to him your typical workout and the frequency, and he should be able to recommend a sturdy shoe that fits your needs. This may not be cheapest shoe but it shouldn't necessarily be the most expensive either. If you are unsure about the recommendation, visit another shoe store for a second opinion.

As for exercising barefoot, the only time this is appropriate is when you are exercising in sand! All other surfaces simply place too much stress on the foot to be acceptable. Do yourself a favor and buy the right shoes for your workout – your feet will thank you!

Overestimating the Intensity

Too often exercisers overestimate the intensity of workouts and credit themselves a little too much. The right intensity is purely an individual decision but a good general guideline is to try to carry on a conversation. If you can speak in short sentences with a breath after each one, you're in the general area. Needing a breath after each word is the high end of the intensity range, but you should never exercise so hard that you can't speak. That's a dangerous situation and if you feel yourself becoming unable to communicate, slow down immediately and allow your body to return to normal.

Pushing your body to the high end of its intensity helps rev your metabolism and burn

more calories. Don't get comfortable in your workout and assume that your efforts are enough, because becoming complacent can seriously slow down your weight loss. Make it a point to push yourself to work hard and your body will reward you with increased aerobic capacity and decreased fat and weight. Many trainers suggest purchasing a heart rate monitor that can accurately identify when you are working within your target heart range. This can be a useful tool but the best tool of all is your own personal assessment of how hard you think you are working.

Sports Fitness: Fun Way to be Healthy

When you talk about sports fitness, what comes first in your mind? It is, basically, the different sports activities, right? This is because sports fitness has always been referred to as the sports themselves.

Generally, sports entail physical activities that are usually carried out for some "recreational" function, such as self-satisfaction, entertainment, competition, etc. It uses physical activity that is why most fitness experts regard sports as one way of staying fit and healthy. It can also be considered as one way of physical fitness; the only difference is that sports fitness is more inclined to the development of skill or ability.

Like other types of physical fitness, sports fitness is also capable of toning down body fat. Because of his rigid and strict health program, a sports enthusiast is able to maintain a well-balanced lifestyle in order to cope with the strenuous demands of his competitive sport. In sports, players truly value their health. They have to in order to endure the kind of physical rigors of their sport as well as to come up with the energy that is required for them to play at the top of their game.

Here are some tips all sports enthusiasts should abide by:

1. Drinks lots of water

Humans can survive days, or even months without food, but they can never last a day without water. Water is, indeed, the most important element needed by the body. Excessive perspiration, without any means of replenishing the lost fluid, will result to serious health problems, and even death.

Therefore, for people who are into strenuous exercises and trainings, it is best to always drink lots of water.

However, for sports enthusiasts, water may not be enough to replace the kind of fluid lost. Hence, it might be better to have sports drinks instead. Aside from the fluid, sports drinks have two additional important ingredients needed by a person who is into sports fitness: carbohydrates and electrolytes.

Electrolytes are usually lost during strenuous physical activity, and this can only be replaced through sports drinks. Carbohydrates, on the other hand, are also needed by the body during rigid workouts to provide more energy so that the body can cope up to the demands of the activity.

2. More veggies!

People who are into sports fitness require more intakes of vegetables and fruits. This is because the body is craving for more vitamins and mineral supplements. It makes the body stronger and healthier enabling it to cope up with demands of the activity.

3. Calcium intake

People who are into sports fitness should have calcium present on their diet. This is to provide stronger bones to the body. Since the body is more exposed to greater physical activities, it is important to have stronger bones in order to avoid fractures or certain bone diseases like “osteoporosis.”

Calcium can be found in different vitamin and mineral supplements. They are also abundant in foods like sardines, tofu, dairy products, etc.

4. Warm up exercises are always important before any kind of strenuous activities.

This kind of activity is needed in order not to strain the body. Hence, before playing the sports that you love, it is best to do some warm-up exercises first.

Indeed, engaging into sports activities is one great way of being physically fit. The best thing about it is that in sports you get to enjoy the best of both worlds: fun and exercise!

Training for Your First 5K

When you make the decision to challenge your body and run your first 5K race, ideally you already run at least three to four times per week and have no trouble running one to two miles without resting. The best programs for this type of runner are geared towards preparing you gradually and are typically scheduled to require approximately nine to twelve weeks.

If you are an absolute beginner with no experience but still exercise regularly, allow yourself at least six months to adequately prepare for the 3.1-mile race by first getting accustomed to running and then moving on to training. Newcomers to exercise and running should allocate six to nine months to ensure enough time to become aerobically fit and conduct an appropriate training schedule. You should never simply sign up for any kind of competitive race if you aren't in good shape. Trying to run a race without

any kind of preparation will lead to breathlessness, frustration, and incredibly sore muscles the next day.

For those of you who fit the bill for beginning training for your first 5K race, here's the deal: good programs are made up of easy runs for endurance, speed runs to increase agility and pace and hilly workouts to build lower body strength. Rest days are scheduled in as needed. Most schedules should be fairly flexible, allowing you to exchange workouts for days when you feel you need a break.

Allowing your body plenty of rest is vital to a successful training program because if you wear your body out, you will be unable to participate. Equally important is keeping tabs on how your body feels – do you feel any pain as you run? If you ever feel anything beyond normal muscle fatigue or have recurring pains in your feet or legs, stop your program and get checked out by a medical professional. You won't do yourself any favors by running through pain and doing so may lead to serious damage – instead, get it checked out and treated and you'll be back in peak condition sooner rather than later.

In addition to a regular running schedule, good preparation programs also include weight-training to help build up your muscles. Running for 3.1 miles requires a lot from more muscles than you might think and it's important to be as strong as possible. When your muscles are better developed they can better support your body and increase your stamina. Since the body is essentially held up and together by the intricate muscular network, the stronger that network is, the better! Look for a weight-training plan that focuses on legs and core to build the best support.

Many people are curious about the proper diet for the training program. Most trainers do not recommend any specific regimen for race training other than to maintain a healthy diet including essential components like protein, vegetables, and, yes, even fat. Fat is a necessary part of every diet in order to maintain a healthy body but make sure you eat the right kind of fat. Saturated fats like those found in junk food are not the right kind and can seriously detract from your health.

The best diet for everyone is well balanced with foods from all major groups but a focus on vegetables and protein as well as low fat and low-sodium. To make sure your diet has enough of the proper vitamins and nutrients, try using some of the free diet assessment tools available on the Internet. Many websites offer these useful calculators as part of an overall program to track your progress, and that can be helpful for the runner who needs to monitor more than more area of his preparation.

While running will be the major part of your plan, you should consider some other tools that can assist you in reaching your goal. Keeping an accurate record of your workout schedule as well as your diet can help you pinpoint areas that need work as well as areas that have improved. Tools to consider include training logs, which can be found at most major sports stores and tracking applications for your PDA. Your PDA manufacturer probably offers a program for purchase on the company website or you can visit an online retailer of PDA applications to find the one that best fits your needs.

Training for and completing a 5K run can be an exhilarating and fulfilling experience.

Allow yourself plenty of time so you can prepare in the best fashion possible – when you cross that finish line, you'll feel like a million bucks!

Shaping Up Five Problem Areas

Everyone has a particular problem area that frustrates. For some people, it may be the hips, for others it's saggy arms. For millions it's the dreaded jelly belly! The truth is that you cannot spot-tone specific areas but there are moves you can do in conjunction with regular cardio exercise that will help make your problem spot disappear! Here are five of the most common complaints and ideas for shaping them up!

Droopy Buttocks

The saggy butt is one of the top complaints of both men and women, but it's also one of the easiest muscles to tone and shape! The buttocks are controlled by the gluteal muscles, which are among the largest muscles of the body and provide support for sitting, standing and squatting. Because these muscles are so large and are used every day, they respond very quickly to toning.

Exercises: Squats are the number one move to shape up the butt. Begin by standing with your feet about shoulder-width apart and your hands by your sides. You may want to place a chair behind you for support. Gradually sit back until your buttocks almost touch the chair and then straighten up. Do three sets of 20 squats daily.

"Batwings" or Saggy Arms

The bane of older women everywhere (and many younger women, too!) is the saggy muscle that runs along the back of the upper arm opposite the bicep muscle. This is known as the tricep and can be challenging to tone, but it can be done.

Exercises: Begin by holding a 3-5-lb. weight in your right hand. Raise the weight straight above your head and then slowly lower the weight back and down until your elbow forms a right angle, then raise it back up. Do three sets of 20 repetitions daily.

Saddlebags

Many people tend to store fat along the hips and outer thighs, charmingly known as "saddlebags." Getting rid of saddlebags can be difficult but the best results come from a combination of consistent cardio exercise and isometric movements that help tone the muscle.

Exercises: Begin by standing straight with one hand on a chair for support. Lift your right leg a few inches off the ground and then raise your leg out to the side and lower it. Repeat this movement for three sets of 25 repetitions daily.

Jelly Belly

Having a saggy stomach is common and it's important to realize that crunches alone will not banish the jiggle. The fat that lies over the muscle is what creates the saggy, loose appearance. Muscle-building moves should be paired with cardiovascular exercise for the best results and be prepared to invest time and effort. Shaping and defining the stomach can take months, but it's worth every minute.

Exercises: Begin by lying facedown on a yoga mat. Place your hands on the mat near your shoulders, take a deep breath, and then push your body up until the hands and feet support it. Hold this position for 20 seconds. Lower yourself down to the floor, rest for a few seconds, and then repeat. Do three sets of 10 repetitions daily. This is known as the "plank" poses in yoga and is wonderful for toning the abdominal muscles.

Chubby Back or "Bra Overhang"

Excess fat in the back area can make it look like you're hiding several lumpy bundles back there, but with a little persistence you can tone it up and make your back an object of envy. This should be paired with a consistent cardiovascular exercise for the best results.

Exercise: Hold a 3-5-lb. weight in your right hand. Step forward about twelve inches with your left foot. Use your left hand for support as you lean forward and let your right arm hang straight with the weight. Keep your spine straight. Begin lifting the weight slowly, as though you were starting a lawnmower, until the elbow is at a right angle and then lower. Repeat for three sets of 20 repetitions.

Everyone has problem areas but when you couple the appropriate exercise with a regular aerobic regimen, you are on the way to controlling them. A few months down the road, you won't even remember what you looked like before!

Six Easy Changes with Big Impact

Too often people think that to see results with an exercise program, drastic changes are required. The truth is that you don't have to radically alter your lifestyle to see a change in your weight or health, and most of the time just a simple modification can have a big impact without the stress of a major change. Here are some simple tips that can make a big difference in your own health!

Stop drinking soda.

This can be difficult for many people but the simple act of cutting out soda can make an enormous difference in your waistline in just a week! Sodas are full of sugar and calories, and are practically worthless nutritionally. Drinking more than one a day adds

some serious calories to your daily intake, and can result in multiple pounds on your body. Cutting out your daily soda saves you more than 87,000 calories over a year's time – that's equal to over twenty-five pounds! Try a simple experiment: do not drink soda for one week (7 days) and weigh yourself at the beginning and end of the week. You'll be surprised at the change you can see and feel.

Add more fiber to your diet.

You hear this frequently on television and read it in the newspapers, but fiber isn't just about keeping you regular. Fiber in your diet fills you up faster and actually expands in your stomach to literally fill the space far better than other kinds of food. Eating plenty of fiber will keep your appetite under control as well as maintaining a healthy GI tract at the same time. Fiber can be found in a variety of vegetables and breads, so there are many options to choose.

Get an additional hour of sleep per night.

Despite eight hours remaining the gold standard for sleeping hours, few adults actually sleep that much during the night and most average around five or six hours. The lack of sleep doesn't just make you drowsy during the day; it can also make you prone to cravings, irritable, and even gain weight. Studies have shown that failure to get adequate sleep suppresses the production of leptin, a peptide that tells the body to burn calories. Getting just another hour of sleep helps correct sleep debt and can make you feel better almost instantly.

Drink your water...

Water is one of the most powerful allies in the battle against excess weight. When you are dehydrated, your body sends signals to the brain that get misinterpreted as hunger pangs. Drinking enough water throughout the day keeps you satisfied and can ward off unpleasant issues like decreased energy, constipation and slowed mental reactions. A good general guideline is to drink eight 8-oz. glasses of water throughout the day, but pay attention to your body's needs. Drink more water if you feel your body needs it.

...Eat your calories.

Don't allow yourself to be fooled into drinking your daily calories through soda, beer and wine. These beverages rack up the calories fast and furious, and full of sugars that make you crave more. Satisfy your hunger and the emotional need to eat by choosing nutrient-rich food with a minimum of preservatives and you save yourself from empty calories.

Take 10,000 steps every day.

Recent studies show that while most people believe they take ten thousands steps per day or more, in reality that number is closer to 3,000 – 4,000. Challenge yourself by buying a pedometer and wearing during an average day. Check the total number of steps at the end of the day – anything less than 5,000 needs improvement! Ten

thousand steps are roughly equal to four miles of walking. Make it your goal to take ten thousand steps every day and keep working until you get there. This simple change can help you burn calories and fat as you take care of everyday chores, so keep stepping and watch your pedometer count up those steps!

These are very basic changes that won't cost you a lot of time, effort or money, but they will give you serious results in just a few weeks. Incorporate these changes with your daily exercise program and give yourself a pat on the back for all the great work!

A Brief Look at Diet Fitness

Diet fitness is as essential as exercise itself. Diet for fitness provides the essential nutrition one needs to restore worn-out muscles and for healthy growth. Diet fitness should never be taken for granted. With the popularity of keeping fit, many different views, methods, programs and dieting strategies have been formulated by many professionals. Among these are high carb diets and high fat diets.

Which one is more effective and which one should you choose to follow?

The first thing to know would be the fundamental differences between these two diet approaches. As the name implies, high carb diets concentrates on taking in carbohydrate-rich foods, while high fat diets endorses fat-rich foods. High carb diets are utilized for glycogen stored in the liver and muscles. Glycogen is a glucose complex that provides large amounts of energy ready for use in aerobic exercises.

Fats, on the other hand, are well-known for being the richest source of calories. They actually contain 2.5 times more calories than carbohydrates and proteins alike. Studies also show that it takes the body 24 calories to metabolize carbohydrates, while it only takes 3 to burn down fat.

So which one to follow? A person can follow a high carb and low fat fitness diet or the other way around. It is absolutely not recommended to follow both at the same time; unless of course if you want to gain body fat.

But then diet fitness is not all about losing fat. One must also consider one's diet from the perspective of keeping fat off once lost. Research shows that sustainable loss of weight can only be achieved on a diet that suits an individual's food preferences, lifestyle, medical profile and satiety signals.

Diet programs all over can help you shed excess pounds, but only one diet can help you keep the weight off, and it is the one that satisfies you most. Other important aspects of having a fit diet are moderation, balance and variation. One must be careful not to leave out important nutrients and other substances necessary for healthy body functioning.

Low fat high carbs, high carbs low fat? The question is not which diet program will work out but which is it that will work for you. Striving for a sexy, lean and healthy body does not have to burden. Diet fitness does not have to mean sticking to the same kind of food for life. What it does mean is finding a diet that is right for you, that allows you to eat the foods that you like to eat the most, and sticking to it!

Be a Man of Fitness

Fitness is the essence of a man. Fitness is the ability of a person to do his normal everyday tasks with full alertness and vigor without worrying about fatigue afterward and with extra energy in reserve which can be useful when emergencies arise or during leisure and recreation. Overall fitness must be the primary goal every man must try to achieve. In fitness, no one is ever too young or too old for improvement.

One's fitness can be improved by engaging in aerobic exercises and through strength training. There are three components of overall fitness that every man must focus on working out in order to be in healthy, tip-top shape. These are cardiovascular work, strength training and of course, these should be coupled with a healthy diet.

Stay strong by building muscles. Man's fitness regimen should include a work out routine which aims to build the muscles. Aging causes a decrease in muscle mass of five to seven pounds (2-3.2 kgs) of muscle for every ten years in one's adult life, given that he lives an inactive lifestyle. Truly, the saying "use it or lose it" is very applicable to the muscles. Fortunately, there is a good solution to this. Loss of muscle mass can be replaced by engaging in strength training.

Improve your life expectancy with a cardiovascular work out. Flexibility exercises, strength training and a cardiovascular work out help boost a man's fitness and all these should be part of a man's work out scheme. But of all these, cardiovascular work is the most necessary. Exercises under cardiovascular work condition and develop the heart, cardiovascular system and also work out large muscle groups.

So if you are a man and you do not have much time for working out, devoting whatever free time you might have to aerobic exercises would do just fine. You might have to pass on developing those biceps but so long as cardiovascular work out exercises are done, then the blood pressure, heart and cholesterol levels will be fine to keep you staying happy and healthy.

The essence of nutrition to man's fitness. It is best as well as well recommended to eat whole and natural foods frequently than do it on large amounts in one to three sittings. Always keep variety in mind when doing the shopping. This will ensure that you are getting most if not all of the nutrients and minerals needed by the body to keep fit and healthy. Always keep the three important macronutrients in the diet; these are fats, carbohydrates and proteins. Prioritize proteins though over carbohydrates but never

exclude any one of the three on some fad diet.

Some tips in keeping a man's fitness level high, efficient and safe:

- 1.) Drink plenty of water all through out the day, especially when working out.
- 2.) Do exercises properly using the correct techniques, whether it's weight lifting or aerobic exercises. Always read and understand, and follow of course, the instructions outlined by the personal trainer.
- 3.) Make sure there is always a spotter when lifting weights.
- 4.) Challenge the muscles, but make sure that it's kept safe.
- 5.) Stretch, warm-up prior to working out and cool-down gradually after sessions.
- 6.) Check the equipment for safety before using them.
- 7.) It is better to do less than overdo the whole thing. Overtraining will exhaust enthusiasm and kill performance.

Fitness for Women - Stay Fit and Healthy!

Here are 12 tips for women to stay fit and healthy:

1. Staying fit and healthy starts with a balanced diet. Know and monitor the right weight for your age. Consult your doctor to learn what food you should avoid and follow your eating discipline routines. If you are trying to lose some weight, foods with high calories should be omitted from your meals. Food with high fiber and low fat should be included a priority in your grocery list instead of red meat, sugars and fats.

2. Get on a program that will best suit you. Every woman is different. You may have surgical history where a program may not be suited for you. Always consult a qualified trainer to make sure that the fitness program will not hurt you. If the fitness program is not for you, it will only be a cause of frustration and injuries.

3. Set realistic targets. Wouldn't you be frustrated if you set your mind into reshaping your body in month? Make sure that the body you prefer in a period of time is achievable and realistic. The program should also be practical and will not give you false hopes. It is important to be aware of the blocks you encounter in your daily living. This will help you know what program is satisfactory. And once a program has been reached, then you can set goals and timelines that are realistic.

4. Exercises should work on the parts of your body where muscles are. The reason mainly is, when you develop muscles, you burn more calories and then you

lessen the fats in your body. Multi-joint exercises and weight lifting are recommended. Learn what exercises work on certain parts of your body. Multi-joint exercises are also said to be effective but time saving.

5. Drink plenty of water. Drinking at least eight glasses of water everyday. This cleanses the body from impurities. It is also advised for lactating women to increase water intake to keep the body hydrated.

6. Take Vitamins and Supplements. Do not forget your Calcium supplement. Sufficient Calcium intake is beneficial for women of all ages. This has been proven to prevent having cramps and Pre-Menstrual Period (PMS) Symptoms. It also prevents Osteoporosis especially for menopausal women. Vitamin E boosts strong immune system. Women who undergo menopausal period should take Vitamin E-400 as it stops night sweats and hot flashes. Also, Vitamin E is said to be best in avoiding wrinkles when aging.

7. Quit smoking. If you are smoking, stop. It is also a big "NO" for pregnant women, as this will affect the health of the baby. Pregnant women who smoke may pass the harmful content of cigarettes to babies through the bloodstream. Recent studies have shown that women smokers are more prone to diseases than men smokers. Women who smoke have a high risk of getting breast cancer. Also limit your alcohol intake.

8. Incorporate exercises in your daily routine. Take a walk after work, use stairs instead of elevator or play with your kids when you are at home. Home exercises are also effective especially when you do not have time to go to the gym and would like to lose some weight. Yoga and Pilates are only a few of the many effective exercises you can do at home. Exercises help in limiting the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

9. Avoid stress. Many women are prone to too much stress. Stress has been known as cause to many sicknesses. As much as possible take time to relax. Read a good book, hang out with friends and engage into sports. Pamper yourself by going to parlors or you can do some shopping. And do not forget to get enough sleep to revive your energy.

10. Use sunscreen to protect your skin from the harmful rays of the sun. Wear hats when under the sun to protect your skin. Too much sun is bad for your skin. The skin is prone to cancer when exposed to too much sunlight. It also speeds up the aging of skin cells, which causes wrinkles to women.

Tips on How to Become a Fitness Model

Everyone is busy. But considering what is at stake, making time for exercise needs to be a priority right now. Thirty minutes a day is not too much when you get right down to it. Cut one prime-time show out of your evening television-viewing schedule. Get up a half-

hour earlier each morning. Use half of your lunch hour for a brisk walk. You can find time if you look hard enough for it.

In fact, there are people who find time to manage and endorse the advantages of physical fitness just so they can prove to the world what a physically fit person can look like.

It is for this reason that most people contend that fitness models are one of the healthiest and most appealing people in the world. They embody the perfect concept of a physically fit person. Fitness models are, indeed, the epitome of health, life, vigor, and real beauty.

In reality, virtually everyone who has the capability to move can exercise to some degree; and everyone who is capable of projecting the benefits of exercise and physical fitness can be a fitness model.

Therefore, if you think that you have what it takes to be a fitness model, here are some tips on how to become one.

1. Deviate from the common notion that fitness is just a matter of the body figure.

The problem with the society today is that people tend to admire and look up to females who are thin and sexy and to males who have brawny, muscular biceps, triceps, and wonderful abs.

The upshot is that people tend to exert so much effort in exercise not because they want to be healthy and fit but because they want to look like the fitness models that they usually see in TV, posters and magazines.

To be a fitness model, you should start working your way to a healthier you and not just a sexier, physically attractive person that you want to be. After all, being a fitness model does not necessarily mean you have to have a "fashion-model" body size.

2. Believe in the saying, "You are what you eat."

If you want to be a fitness model, you have to believe on the fact that our body shows what kinds of food we eat. Your body will also depict the kind of physical activities that you have in life.

Hence, if you do not conform to this belief, chances are, you will find it hard to be a fitness model, and to inform the people what it is like to be physically fit.

3. Live a healthy lifestyle

Genes play big roles in a person's health. But these do not certainly influence what you will eat at breakfast, lunch, or dinner, and the kind of activity that you will engage in.

Hence, if your lifestyle will not be healthy, chances are, you can never be a fitness model.

4. Have a “positive self image”

In order to be a fitness model, you have to incorporate positive body image in your life. This means that you should love your body in spite of what is happening in the environment or the occurrences in your life.

You should never wish for a body that you know it is not yours. Do not burden yourself into thinking that life could be better if you only had thinner thighs or beautiful abs.

Through positive self-image, you are able to gain respect for yourself, which in turn inspires others to respect you and admire you.

The key point here is that, being a fitness model is not all about vanity and physical attributes alone. What matters most is the beauty of being physically fit and healthy that radiates from your body as it exudes the glow of health.

Yoga Versus Pilates

The yoga craze of the late twentieth century ended up segueing into the Pilates craze of the early 2000's but many people questioned the exercise value of both. Despite media hoopla, few people actually seemed to understand the physical benefits of either. The truth is that both forms of exercise have unique approaches to fitness and can provide significant benefits for the strengthening and conditioning of the body. Though similar in the focus on strengthening the body through isometric movements, the paths of yoga and Pilates ultimately diverge.

Yoga was developed over five thousand years ago in Northern India. It is first mentioned in the sacred Hindu text Rig Veda. During its first clear period, yoga was practiced and refined by Vedic priests, who documented the practice in their writings. Patanjali, who is considered by most to be the father of classical yoga, fostered the next phase of yoga's development. Following Patanjali's broad expansion of yoga and its meanings, Tantric yoga became accepted as the new form of yoga and concentrated on cleansing both the mind and the body. Yoga finally neared its modern form in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when more and more Indian yogis traveled to the West, sharing their art and increasing the world's interest in yoga. The 1947 premiere of Indra Devi's yoga studio in Hollywood became the opening bell to the American fascination with yoga. While most incarnations of yoga have had a strong spiritual element, modern Hatha yoga does not align itself with any religion or spirituality; instead it focuses primarily on the yoga postures and using them to reach and maintain strength and flexibility as well as inner calm.

Compared to yoga, Pilates is a spring chicken in terms of age. Joseph Pilates, who was

born in Germany and suffered frail health as a child, created the program. Pilates overcame his childhood sicknesses through exercise and began to create a system of physical development that would later become his legacy to the world. In his thirties, Pilates traveled to England to work as a self-defense instructor to Scotland Yard but was forced into an internment camp during World War I. Despite the hardship of internment, Pilates went about his business within the camp, teaching his physical program to his fellow internees.

During the terrible flu epidemic of 1918, thousands of people died, but none of Pilates' protégés were affected. Following the war, Pilates returned to Germany but left for good when asked to teach his method to the German army. Settling in New York City with his new wife, Pilates opened his first fitness studio. He taught thousands of students until his death in 1967 at the age of 87. Trusted students carried on with the Pilates name and method, and by the early twenty-first century more than 5 million Americans were practicing Pilates.

Despite the wildly different histories, yoga and Pilates share the same focus on developing the muscles of the body and strengthening it by primarily using the body's own resistance to build up power. The postures of yoga and the movements of Pilates are sometimes strikingly similar, but ultimately the two follow separate roads. Yoga has spawned a multitude of varieties that range from Kundalini to Iyengar to Tantric, though Hatha remains the most popular form in the United States. Many first-time yoga practitioners can find the pace to be overly slow or grow impatient while waiting to see results. The best candidate for Hatha yoga is a person who appreciates time to slow down, meditate, and spend quiet time with oneself, and does not become easily discouraged by failure to immediately master a pose.

Yoga requires a certain measure of patience and while this can be developed through practice, lacking it can make the first several weeks of yoga practice very trying for a person. The good thing about yoga is that it rarely requires extra equipment. You will need a yoga mat to begin with but after that, accessories are optional. Blocks, straps, and other tools can be helpful, but are not required.

Pilates is a method that is fairly easy to master. It doesn't call for complicated movements and is usually straightforward and simple to understand. The program's movements also tend to build strength fairly quickly so that results are apparent sooner than in yoga. The ideal Pilates practitioner should be able to discipline himself to complete his routine every day, which is a large part of the method. Attending classes is a great way to start but for the maximum results, the method should be practiced daily. Pilates typically doesn't require many props, though advanced practitioners will probably want to add tools to their workout in order to maintain a high level of fitness.

Treating an Exercise Injury

You're moving along, having a great time getting fit, when all of a sudden you twist your ankle or heft the weight the wrong way. What do you do when you receive an injury from exercise? The first rule is, don't panic! The vast majority of exercise injuries turn

out to be simple and fast healing, so the odds are on your side. There are some specific steps to take for different injuries, so it's important to read through the following and be prepared for any accidents or injuries that may decide to come your way. Take steps to make yourself aware of appropriate treatment and you just may prevent a serious injury.

By far one of the most common injuries of all exercises is the twisted ankle. Whether you are walking, running, or rollerblading, sometimes it just takes a moment of slipped concentration or stepping on an unexpected object that throws your balance off, even if just for a second. Unfortunately that second is enough to soundly wrench your ankle and send you stumbling to the ground. While your pride may be wounded, it's probably your ankle that hurts more. If you are in a safe area, remain seated on the ground and assess the situation. **DO NOT REMOVE YOUR SHOE!** The number one rule for twisted and sprained ankles is to never remove your shoe until you are in a place that you can stay for several hours. If you take your shoe off and the foot swells up, you may be forced to walk over some unpleasant ground before reaching a place to rest. Leaving the shoe on also offers a small measure of support for walking.

Gently probe your ankle with your fingers, making sure that nothing is broken. If you are confident that the injury is nothing more than a twist, get to your feet and try to walk a few steps. If you are unable to do so, locate someone to help you. On the other hand, if your foot is able to bear some weight, head back to your home for some first aid. Even if you think your ankle is fine, you should take at least a few hours to recover.

Once you are home, follow the R.I.C.E. plan: Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. Find yourself a comfy place to spend the next few hours, then have a seat and place your foot on several stacked pillows to minimize the amount of blood flowing to the foot. If swelling occurs, it will trap blood in the vessels in the foot and create more pain for you. Whether or not you see swelling, place an ice pack on the ankle for approximately 15 minutes. The ice will help constrict the blood vessels to lessen the pain. You may want to use a compress during the icing to force swelling down. Allow yourself at least two days of rest to provide maximum recovery time to your ankle. Rushing back out to exercise is only paving the way to future injury.

Another common exercise injury is tendonitis in the elbows or wrists, brought on by weight lifting. You may be perfectly fine one day and feeling shooting pains the next, because tendonitis can be subtle and remain fairly hidden until the moment you pick up an object the wrong way. If you notice some pain but exercise anyway, you're only aggravating the situation. Your first move to treat tendonitis should be to cut back on your weight training. Go down to a lower weight or, if the pain is severe, stop training altogether. Allow your body several days to make a healing attempt on the injured tendons. If needed, use ibuprofen for pain and try to keep track of when you feel pain and what brought it on.

After several days of rest, your pain may subside. When that happens, don't immediately go back to your previous weight. Instead, begin with a much lower weight to test your arm strength. If no pain appears, then gradually increase over the next several weeks. If the pain returns, try another few days of rest. Some people do

eventually have to resort to surgery to correct tendonitis but that should be used only as a final option. Many former weightlifters now use other methods of strengthening like Pilates, resistance bands, and others. You can maintain physical strength without the use of weights.

One final common injury that occurs during exercise is a dog bite. This is a serious wound and should not be taken lightly. If you are following your exercise route and encounter an unfriendly dog, take some simple steps to defuse the situation. Avoid looking him in the eyes since dogs consider that a threat. Turn sideways and slowly move away, getting some kind of object between you and the dog if possible. Do not make fast movements that might agitate the dog. If you see that the animal is going to attack, drop to the ground, roll yourself into a ball and cover your head with your arms. In most situations help arrives within minutes. Fast-moving exercisers like runners, joggers, rollerbladers, and bicyclists are far too frequently targets of dogs, so keep an appropriate distance between you and any dogs as you go about your workout.

Knowing a few simple steps to preventing and treating injuries may save you hours of pain and distress later on, but don't let the fear of injury deter you from fitness! The best way to avoid injury is to have a strong, healthy body and that requires exercise!

Exercising While Sick: Yes or No?

Your fitness routine is an important part of your life and you hate to miss a day. But what are you supposed to do when you wake up with a sore throat and a fever? Should you exercise anyway? This has been a point of contention between experts of certain philosophies but the medical response is that whether or not you should exercise depends totally on the situation. Just because you may not feel one hundred percent doesn't necessarily mean that you should flake out on a workout. Some doctors even say that some illnesses actually benefit from exercise. The simplest, straightest answer is if you have a fever or nausea, stay in bed; otherwise a little physical activity might be just what the doctor ordered.

Fever and nausea are two symptoms that can be highly aggravated by physical exertion. Exercise raises the body's temperature anyway and that's exactly what you don't want when you have a fever. If you're sick and have a fever, chances are that you probably won't feel like doing anything anyway, but if you simply must do something, do a few yoga postures for just a few minutes. The soothing nature of yoga may help to calm your mind as well as your body and allow you to relax until your fever breaks. For nausea, lying still is the best remedy.

Trying to work out or even just incorporate some physical activity in your day when you're feeling nauseous is not a smart choice. The likely scenario is that you will aggravate your stomach, already feeling delicate, and end up sicker than before. Do yourself a favor and simply chill out. After all, the faster you recover, the sooner you'll be back in the fitness saddle. Most infectious diseases, like chicken pox, require

complete rest as well. Your body is trying to fight off an infection and it can do that much more efficiently when it's not trying to do step aerobics.

For the range of other symptoms, it's usually okay to work out unless a doctor specifically tells you to refrain from physical activity. When you have a cold and are stuffy and blocked up, getting active can help break up some of the blockage in your sinuses and move it on out. Sore throats typically will not bar you from your workout unless accompanied by a fever. Be careful in cold weather, though, since the frigid air can dry out your throat even more and exacerbate the pain.

Have a headache? A good aerobic workout might be just the ticket to get rid of it. Exercise increases the blood flow in your body, which may sound like a bad thing when you're talking about a headache, but it can actually help regulate the blood flow through the vessel that is causing the pain and get you feeling back to normal much faster. Exercise is also fantastic for PMS or the days that you simply feel a little blue. By increasing the amount of endorphins in your body, exercise makes you feel happier. Physical activity helps move water out of the body's tissues, so the PMS bloat will go away, letting your body return to its normal size.

While there are certainly times when you shouldn't exercise, there are many more times when it's the best idea in the world. Exercise is wonderful for dealing with stress, premenstrual syndrome, and much more. Simply the act of taking time for yourself can affirm your own self-worth and give you a boost in your confidence. Rather than reading romance novels while eating a box of chocolate from the corner drugstore, lace up your shoes and go for an invigorating walk around your neighborhood, greeting familiar faces and enjoying the scenery. You will feel much better than if you had stayed in!

The next time you're feeling less than healthy, assess your body. If you have a fever or nausea, care for yourself by going to bed and allowing your body's natural defenses to do their jobs. If it's a cold, PMS, or simply a bad day, go out and exercise anyway. Try something new like an unfamiliar sport or a different machine at the gym. Make your well being a priority and contribute to your own fitness. You may be surprised at how much better you feel after!

Exercising with Health Issues

Everyday the news announces another research study that proves the benefits of exercise for people ages 0 to one hundred. Most people know of the importance of exercise and some even make an effort to fit it in their daily lives. But what about people who deal with a chronic health problem that limits their ability to exercise? Should those people simply give up on exercise altogether? Doctors and research studies both answer this with an emphatic negative. Exercise still remains one of the most powerful drugs available without a prescription, even for individuals who cannot be active in a traditional activity or manner.

Medical professionals encourage those with chronic health issues to find appropriate physical activity that can be done at least three times weekly. For some people, though, this can be not only challenging but overwhelming. Simply the thought of forcing a less-than-whole body into exercise can be very unappealing.

Fortunately there are many gentler fitness options available today than ever before and nearly all of them can be adjusted to meet the personal needs of the individual. Many of these exercises can even be done within the privacy of the home; so homebound exercisers can still be active.

Water Aerobics

This is one of the most highly recommended options for people with arthritis and other joint and connective tissue disorders. Water supports the body and takes the majority of the stress off the joints. Muscles are able to devote more effort to exercising since they are not called on to support the skeleton. The water provides resistance for the body to work against without causing friction or pain. While intense water aerobic classes can seriously raise your heart rate, it's best to start out at a lower level and gradually increase your activity as you feel comfortable with it.

Water aerobics classes are available at gyms and recreation centers across the country, and typically do not cost much money. Most classes do use some kind of accessories to increase calorie burn. If you are fortunate enough to have your own pool at home, invest in some water accessories and then have your own private class at home! Try to spend at least thirty minutes in the pool initially and aim for about three times per week.

Pilates

Originally developed by a man who was an invalid himself, the Pilates method focuses on building strength in the muscles and in particular conditioning the "powerhouse" or abdominal muscles to provide better support for the spine. The method is named after its founder, Joseph Pilates, who spent the first thirteen years or so as a weak, sickly child until he discovered exercise. By age 15 Pilates was healthy and strong, and he continued to promote his method throughout Europe and the United States. Even now, in the twenty-first century, the Pilates method is still making a difference in the lives of people dealing with chronic illness and weakness.

Pilates classes can be found in almost all cities and you may want to watch a class before choosing to commit to anything. If you prefer the privacy of your own home, there are dozens of videos and DVDs available from qualified instructors that you can use to strengthen and condition your body. The method requires few props so there's no major investment of money. In the beginning, start with 15-20 minutes of work and gradually increase the time as you feel able.

Hatha Yoga

Developed over five thousand years ago in northern India, yoga has evolved over the years from a highly religious activity to a strengthening method that can be as spiritual

or non-spiritual as you prefer. Yoga is an exceptionally flexible program – if there's a pose you don't feel comfortable doing, simply skip it and move to the next one. It is your program and you can adjust it to meet your level of skill and strength. Some days you may not feel comfortable enough to do some poses while other days it may be simple.

Yoga does not demand that you complete every pose perfectly or match your instructor's stance exactly. If you choose to find a class in your area, be aware that many studios offer yoga classes for students who need a gentler pace. Try to view a class before deciding to sign up. The video and DVD market for yoga has exploded within the past few years and you can find almost anything and everything. The best way to begin a home program is to purchase a beginner's workout on video or DVD and begin using it three times a week or as often as you feel capable. Gradually increase your time and skill level as your body grows stronger.

Living with health issues does not mean that you have to allow your body to grow weak. Investigate one of these safe and gentle options today, and you could be on your way to a stronger, healthier body tomorrow.

Fitness Magazines: What's with them?

Fitness magazines are specifically designed to provide you with facts and information to come up with an improved body and a healthier life.

The best thing about most fitness magazines is that they do not "beat around the bush." Most fitness magazines provide you with straightforward, no hype or shortcuts, just detailed and reliable information and feasible tips about fitness, health, and ideas on how to live a quality life. Fitness magazines only provide relevant pieces of information that matter most to you and your family.

Each article written in fitness magazines is classified according to the topics they possess. The categories may range from basic information about foods to the sports and fitness advices from health and fitness experts. Consequently, one of the known benefits of having fitness magazine in the market is based on the premise that people need ageless realities bounded by true-to-life testimonials of other people.

The articles written in fitness magazines are based on unfussy, systematic approach specifically made to answer timely issues about health and fitness. These articles are specifically generated to motivate people to cope up and succeed in spite of the many adversities in life.

Best of all, fitness magazines are also great sources of advertisements that focus more on health products such as vitamins and minerals food supplements and other necessary equipments needed to keep your body at its optimum peak of health.

Alternatively, with the advent of information technology, fitness magazines are now available in the Internet. Like its printed replica, electronic forms of fitness magazines likewise provide pertinent information about health and fitness.

The only edge they have with their printed counterparts is that they can be easily accessed anytime, anywhere. You can even download some articles free of charge. There is also a wide array of tips and advices regarding some frequently asked questions of fitness buffs.

Moreover, fitness magazines on the Internet also provide some healthy gourmet recipes that fitness aficionados can use. These recipes do not just offer alternative way to stay fit but also provides sumptuous treat to the palate.

Best of all, virtual fitness magazines offers readily available hyperlinks to web sites that offer fitness products and equipments, and with the convenience of online shopping, you can readily purchase these products with just one click.

Indeed, there could be no better way to acquire the right information and facts about health and fitness than what fitness magazines can provide. They are definitely your one-stop health journal in a snap.

You are invited to pass this report along to as many people as you like, provided that you make no changes to it and that you give it away for FREE.

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