

CREATING A FITNESS TRAINING PROGRAM FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

INTRODUCTION

Starting a fitness program is the first step to living a healthier lifestyle. You should congratulate yourself on taking this first step. While most people realize they need to make changes in how they exercise, eat, and reduce stress, many times other factors stand in the way of these changes.

Now that you want to start a fitness program, you will have to consider the following:

- Type of fitness program
- Amount of time you have to devote to the fitness program
- Equipment you will need in order to safely begin a fitness program
- Support system that will help you stay motivated
- Goals you will have to meet along the way

In as little as seven days you can create and begin a fitness program. Proper planning can help make adding fitness activities into your schedule easier.

WHAT IS A FITNESS PLAN?

A fitness plan is a set of guidelines, goals, and exercises you decide you want to do each day. Even if you can only find 30 minutes three days a week, this will be enough time to improve your health, give you more energy, and help you reduce stress.

Most fitness plans include long-term and short-term goals. You should write them down and track your progress. Every time you reach a goal, you should reward yourself. This will help you stay motivated.

Additional materials you may need include:

- Calculator

- Calendar
- Stop watch
- Fitness journal

These items can help track your progress and give you concrete proof that your fitness plan is working.

CREATING YOUR FITNESS PLAN

The items to consider are the types of fitness activities you want to participate in. These can be determined in several ways:

- Amount of time you have to devote to a plan
- Current health
- What you want to achieve through a fitness plan
- Amount you have to spend on a fitness plan

Once you have figured out these criteria, then you can begin to build your plan.

FITNESS ACTIVITIES

Choose fitness activities based on what you enjoy and what you want to accomplish.

- **Aerobics**
Mainly for toning and sculpting specific parts of the body. Also used to increase blood flow and heart rate and encourage weight loss.
- **Weight training**
Used mostly to tone and sculpt muscles by building muscle mass and shrinking body fat.

- **Yoga**
Used mainly for lengthening muscles, increasing flexibility, and reducing stress through stretches and holding poses
- **Walking/Running**
Weight loss, increase aerobic activity, and increase endurance
- **Sports activities**
Overall workout and muscle building. Many people enjoy these activities because they do not seem like a workout.

It is important to choose activities you are interested in pursuing as this will keep you motivated. Don't be afraid to try something new or combine activities in order to participate in physical activity each day.

If you have never created a fitness plan before, you should try something that is low impact like walking at first, and then as you get into shape, you can move on to an activity that is more challenging. Walking is a great way to increase your heart rate, stimulate the muscles, and burn fat.

SETTING GOALS

Setting goals is the next step in creating a fitness program. Goals can include the following:

- List of fitness activities and days you will be participating in them
- Number of pounds you want to lose each week
- Number of miles you want to walk each week
- Days when you have an aerobics or yoga class
- Joining a local sports team
- Changing diet and exercise habits
- Marathons/charity events you want to participate in
- Making sure you get at least 30 minutes a day of physical activity

Goals can be anything you want them to be. Don't be afraid to be specific about goals and try to make them as realistic as possible.

Remember that goals can be changed at any time. If you want to exercise each day, but have to stay late for meetings at work, change your goal to three days a week.

When goals are set properly, they should:

- Be a helpful reminder of what you need to do each day
- Motivate you to keep moving forward
- Gauge your progress so you can make changes if necessary
- Help you reach your ideal weight, or muscle mass
- Give you a sense of control over your health

Writing down goals is a great way to remember them and make them seem more real. While goals are meant to help and inspire, they are only guidelines. As events in your life occur, such as a job promotion, or pregnancy, you will have to alter your fitness goals to meet these changes.

TIPS FOR FOLLOWING THROUGH

Now that you have created a set of goals, you will need to learn to follow them. This can be done in several ways:

- Use a calendar or day planner and highlight the days you plan on working out or participating in other fitness activities. This will force you to keep that time open for your fitness plan. Over time, it will become just another daily habit.
- Schedule fitness activities during times that are less busy during the day. This many mean having to exercise in the morning or at night. Try to schedule times that are convenient, but also reflect your personality. If you are a night person, don't schedule a workout first thing in the morning.
- Read articles about fitness and learn as much as you can. Not only will this inspire you, it will also give you ideas about activities you can add to your plan in the future.
- Vary your routine every few weeks or months. While your goals can remain the same, the activity you do can be changed so you don't become bored.

SIGNING UP FOR CLASSES OR PERSONAL TRAINER

If you want to start a weight training program or create a fitness plan using aerobics or yoga, you may need help from those who work at a fitness club. Before beginning your program, sign up for classes or a personal trainer so you will be able to start as soon as possible.

Make sure classes and training sessions do not interfere with other aspects of your life. Try to schedule one hour that will not be interrupted during the week.

STARTING A FITNESS JOURNAL

A fitness journal can be used to help track your progress, vent your frustrations, and help keep you motivated. Journals do not have to be long entries each day. Always write down what you did and how you feel about it. Some days you will want to write more, while others days you won't.

BUYING FITNESS EQUIPMENT – CREATING A HOME GYM

Even if you are planning to join a fitness club, you may still want to buy a few pieces of fitness equipment to have at home. But for those who don't want to join a club, creating a home gym is the answer. Depending on the amount of room you have, buying a one or two pieces that target certain muscle groups may be all you will need.

When buying equipment for a home gym, you should:

- Buy only what you need
- Try machines and free weights before buying them to make sure they are comfortable and what you are looking for
- Ask about warranties
- Make sure all parts are included. Some machines require you to buy weights and bands separately

- Make sure all equipment will fit in your home

A home gym has many benefits including:

- The ability to workout when you want
- You are the only one using the equipment
- Over time, it is less expensive than fitness club memberships

Other types of equipment you may need depending on the types of program you have designed include:

- Mats
- Gloves for lifting weights
- Weightlifting belt
- Bands or straps for stretching

Investing in a fitness program by purchasing equipment is another way to motivate yourself.

VISITING YOUR DOCTOR

After deciding which fitness programs you want to participate in, you should visit your doctor so you can proceed without having to worry about injuring yourself or making yourself sick.

Unless you have a prior injury or illness that caused you to remain in bed for weeks at a time, you should be able to participate in the programs mentioned above.

Reasons why you may have to alter your plan include:

- Old knee or back injury
- You find out you are pregnant

- You recently had surgery
- Age concerns
- Allergies
- Advanced stress or fatigue

While you can still include physical activity in your daily routine, you may need to shorten the time or focus on one activity at a time instead of two more.

Always visit your doctor if you experience any pain after beginning a fitness program.

GETTING YOUR BODY READY

While you may be ready to throw yourself into a fitness program right away, you should give your body a chance to get used to increased activity. Take it slowly when starting a new fitness program. Try the following in order to gradually get your body used to being active:

- Stretch for 5 minutes before and after your workout
- Work your way up to 30 minutes by starting at 15 or 20 minutes a day or every other day
- Start with smaller weights and work your way up to larger ones
- Take beginner classes first
- Pick one fitness routine and stay with it until you feel comfortable to move one to another
- Drink a lot of water in order to stay hydrated

After a week or two, your body may be ready for an increase. If you are too sore to move after a workout, then you may need to scale it back until your body is ready.

Reasons to take it easy for the first few weeks:

- Prevent injury
- Maintain motivation
- Keep stress levels low

PREVENT INJURY

The biggest reason you should not overdo it in your first few weeks of your fitness program is to prevent injury. Twisting an ankle, popping a knee, or straining muscles are painful and can lead to permanent injury.

This is why stretching is so important. Muscles that are limber and flexible are less likely to be injured when used over and over.

MAINTAIN MOTIVATION

If you workout too much during your first few weeks, you will lose motivation because it may be difficult to keep up. This is why setting realistic goals is important. As you become stronger, you will be able to increase the severity of your workout or take on a few extra days.

KEEP STRESS LEVELS LOW

In addition to physical stress, you are putting yourself through emotional stress as well. Taking on too much as once could persuade you to not want to workout anymore. A fitness plan is used to reduce stress, not increase it.

STARTING YOUR FITNESS PLAN

A typical beginner's fitness plan could look like this:

- **Monday**
15-20 minutes of physical fitness
- **Tuesday**
rest – write in journal

- **Wednesday**
20-25 minutes of physical fitness
- **Thursday**
rest – write in journal
- **Friday**
25-30 minutes of physical fitness

As you can see, you will be gradually increasing your time until you reach 30 minutes. Depending on what you will be doing, this can vary.

Once you have used this plan for a month or two, you can advance into this plan:

- **Monday**
30 minutes of physical fitness
- **Tuesday**
rest – write in journal
- **Wednesday**
30 minutes of physical fitness
- **Thursday**
rest – write in journal
- **Friday** – 30 minutes of physical fitness

Being able to workout 30 minutes at least three times a day will give you more energy, reduce stress, and accomplish your goals.

For many people, starting a fitness plan is very exciting. They are happy buying equipment, workout clothing, running or walking shoes, and learning how to safely workout to prevent injury or stress to the body.

But after a month or so, they may begin to lose interest. This can happen for a variety of reasons:

- Not seeing the results they anticipated
- Not being able to stick to the fitness schedule
- Gaining weight

- Boredom
- Injury occurred after beginning program
- Goals were unrealistic

Once people begin to lose interest in fitness, they will either give up or find ways to stay motivated.

POSITIVE THINKING

One of the most important components for success when starting a fitness program is positive thinking. By remaining positive and upbeat about the program, you will be able to overcome most stumbling blocks. Positive thinking can:

- Motivate you to keep going even when you are tired or discouraged
- Allow you to set realistic goals that you can reach through hard work
- Create challenges that will keep your program interesting
- Make you understand that fitness should be a part of everyone's life in order to remain healthy

If you are beginning to feel discouraged because you are not seeing the results you thought you would see or you no longer feel challenged by the program, staying positive will help you find solutions to alter your state-of-mind and ensure you continue finding ways to add more physical fitness activities into your life.

MOTIVATION

Thinking positive thoughts, using your fitness plan, and checking your goals, are all ways to keep yourself motivated when you don't feel like going to the fitness club or working out at home. It is through motivation that you will succeed. Scheduling time for fitness is the best way to develop a routine, which will help make it easier to exercise.

Other motivational methods include:

- Rewarding yourself
- Starting a blog and discussing your challenges and frustrations
- Reading health articles that promote a healthy lifestyle
- Watching your diet
- Surrounding yourself with those in similar situations

Motivation can come from many sources. You should seek out these sources in order to feel better about the steps you are taking.

MAKING CHANGES TO YOUR FITNESS PLAN

Many times, fitness programs have to be changed in order to accommodate changes that occur in a person's life.

Fitness plans can be changed at any time and for any reason. Common changes that occur include:

- Decrease in the amount of weight used when weight training
- Taking a class that is less or more advanced
- Adding a new sport to your plan
- Substituting one program for another
- Joining a fitness club instead of working out at home
- Partnering with another person

As you can see, changes do not always have to be negative. Many times, altering your workout time, fitness activities, and level of fitness can help motivate you and keep you active.

When making changes, write them down and if you are keeping a journal, explain why those changes were made and how you feel about them.

You may have to make several changes before finding a plan that fits your lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

A fitness plan is the best way to accomplish everything from losing weight to toning your body. Creating a plan that suits your fitness needs as well as your personality can be challenging if you are not honest with yourself. When creating a plan, you should:

- Ask yourself questions about when you can workout, how often, and the types of programs you enjoy
- Create goals that are challenging, but not impossible
- Find out the types of fitness clubs that are in your area and visit them to see which one is right for you
- Make changes when necessary as they will only help motivate and ensure goals are met
- Understand that fitness is a lifestyle, not something you do for three or four months

After learning more about your strengths and weaknesses, and what you are interested in trying, you should put together a plan. If you need help, ask a trainer at your fitness club for advice.

Fitness is not something you do just to pamper yourself, it is a way to ensure you will be healthy for a long time. Giving yourself some time to exercise has many benefits. You will have more energy, you will be under less stress, and you will be able to accomplish a lot more during the day.