

Get fit, get healthy, get happy

Fitness takes on a whole new meaning once you understand its benefits not only for your body, but also for your mind and spirit.

The obvious benefits like weight loss and a more firm and toned body should become your secondary objectives, while being healthier, reducing stress, gaining mental clarity and improving your self-esteem should be what you're primarily aiming for when starting with an exercise routine. Once you've been able to make this mind shift, chances are you'll most probably feel better regardless of your physical measurements.

The basic principles

- **Make it a habit.** Once it's part of your routine and you don't have to think about it anymore, it will be much easier.
- **Get an exercise buddy.** Pick someone who is committed to their health and hold each other accountable.
- **Set realistic goals.** If you aim to get fit within a month, you most probably won't succeed. But if you aim to just

get out there from time to time, you will definitely not succeed either. Set yourself small, reachable, measurable but challenging goals.

- **Get over yourself.** If you haven't been exercising for a while, the mirror is most probably not going to paint a pretty picture of you all sweaty in tight exercise gear. But just get over it, okay? In two months, you're going to look better than you look now.
- **Keep it short and practical.** Don't aim for an hour, aim for 30 minutes, three or four times per week.
- If you don't like routine, **add variation** to your exercise. You can even vary your walking or running routine by simply choosing a different route.
- **Keep track of your improvements.** Don't do it too often, though – you'll most probably not see any change in your measurements or weight in two days. Do not focus on bodily changes only, but rather on your overall feeling of wellness, strength, endurance and flexibility.
- **Record your measurements** (bust, chest, waist, hips, thighs and upper arms) rather than weighing yourself.

Muscle mass is heavier than the fat you're burning, so you might be discouraged by slow weight loss while you are actually burning fat and building muscle mass.

- **Remember that exercising alone is not good enough.** Follow the three golden rules to be physically healthy: exercise,

a healthy eating plan, and drinking enough water.

Exercise to clear your mind

Do you find it easier to work through an issue while on the run, or does inspiration strike you after a workout? Research shows that people who exercise are happier and less overwhelmed at work. Exercise creates new



neurons, increases blood flow, and regulates hormones. A 20-minute workout increases blood flow to the frontal cortex, the part of the brain associated with "executive type" thinking processes such as goal setting, problem solving and planning. Moreover, exercise can help you keep your mind sharp into old age: One study indicated that walking or running 25 km per week can reduce your risk of developing Alzheimer's by 40%.

Add music to the mix. This does not only relieve boredom but it can help improve the quality of your workout by increasing your stamina and putting you in a better mood. According to research, the lyrics or catchy rhythm of motivational music inspires you to exercise longer or work harder during your routine.

Exercise at home

It's possible to get fit at home if you set your mind to it. Every fitness programme should consist of a **warmup**, a **cardiovascular workout**, some **resistance exercises**, **flexibility moves** and a **cooldown**. At home, this could mean an easy walk outside to warm up; some brisk walking, jogging, cycling around the neighborhood or on a stationary bike during the cardiovascular portion; some squats, push-ups and abdominal crunches for resistance; some stretches for flexibility and cooling down in the same way as warming up. Consider downloading an app that can assist you with your exercise routine.

Get active at home

- Get active **in front of the TV**. Find some training material on YouTube, get yourself an exercise program on DVD, or purchase one for your Xbox or PlayStation.
- Use your kids' **trampoline**, or purchase a small workout trampoline.
- Use the **swimming pool** – it's just so much more fun than jogging. It is also ideal if you're older, pregnant or overweight and out of shape, as water reduces the risk of injuries.
- Use a **treadmill** or **stationary bike**.
- Get yourself a set of **dumbbells**.
- Go **cycling, walking or jogging** in your neighborhood. If you're embarrassed of what the neighbors might think, take the dog. Chances are he's in as much need of some exercise as you are.
- **Challenge the kids** to join your exercise routine. Make a bet on who will reach their goals first, and add an exciting reward for the winner.

Do something you like

Find out what works for you. Try joining a kickboxing class, dancing, Pilates, aquarobics, a trampoline class or boot camp. Keep on exploring and trying different options until you find something that you truly enjoy.

Whatever you do, just get started! Find something you like, stick to it for two weeks, and start enjoying the results of your new lifestyle.

Don't wait – join now with Medihelp

- If you're interested in joining a gym, start by visiting Medihelp's free online health and wellness programme, **HealthPrint**, and have a look at the special offer on Planet Fitness gym membership with its free Black Tag membership for a gym buddy.
- HealthPrint members enjoy free participation in all Medihelp-sponsored running and cycling events.
- Do you have a BMI of 30 and higher? Join HealthPrint's 12-week healthy weight loss support programme and get a one week free pass to a Planet Fitness gym near you. You will also receive a Medihelp goodie bag when you complete the programme.
- Join Medihelp MultiSport for runners and walkers in the Gauteng North area and cyclists nationwide for only R256 annually (members on the 12-week weight loss programme pay only R200). Medihelp members and non-members can join the Medihelp MultiSport club, so you're welcome to invite your friend to join you on weekends when MultiSport members participate in races. **é**

Sources:

<https://www.sonima.com/fitness/why-exercise-clears-your-mind/>; www.center4research.org; www.lifehack.org; www.health.com; www.springfreetrampoline.com; www.everydayhealth.com; www.verywellfit.com; www.webmd.com; time.com; www.swimoutlet.com