

... JULY 2010 ...

QUICK TAKES

EXERCISE SAFETY IN HOT WEATHER

Overheating and dehydration can be an issue when exercising outdoors on hot and humid days. To minimize the danger:

- **Wear light-colored, lightweight and loose-fitting clothing**
- **Take frequent breaks in the shade where available**
- **Increase your water intake**
- **Scale back the intensity and duration of your activity**

It is important to recognize the signs of heat-related illness and learn how to respond appropriately. Signs of heat-related illness include profuse sweating, fatigue, thirst, muscle cramp, headache and light-headedness. If you, or someone else, experience these symptoms, get out of the sun, drink cool fluids, spray yourself with water and rest. If the symptoms worsen, call 911.



Setting Up a Home Gym

For many of us, joining a gym is not a practical option. If you're short on time, don't have the money for membership fees or just aren't interested in working out in public, the gym might not be for you.

Creating your own home gym might be the answer. For a small investment, you can transform a small area of your home into an exercise space with many of the exercise benefits of a commercial gym.



Picking the Spot

The first step is to find a place in your home or apartment where you can have some privacy and won't be distracted. It should be large enough that you can stretch out in all directions without touching anything; also try to keep it separate from any sharp edges in case you slip. If you have hardwood or slippery floors you may want to use a small rug or yoga mat to work out on. It may be helpful to have a flight of stairs and/or a television set nearby (we'll get to that below).

What will you do in your new gym? An exercise plan should cover the three main components of physical fitness: cardiovascular, strength and flexibility.

Cardiovascular Training

Cardiovascular exercise may be the most important part of your fitness program. Getting your blood pumping is vital to improving heart and lung function, and plays a critical role in weight management. Exercise bikes can be a great way to get cardiovascular exercise at home. While new ones can be costly, it is possible to get bargains for used bikes online or at yard sales; your local gym may sell them as well. Another home option for cardiovascular exercise is to try workout videos. Kickboxing anyone?

Or you can keep it simple by doing jumping jacks or step-ups at the bottom of a flight of stairs. A low-tech workout still provides all the health benefits. No matter what you choose, your goal should be to work up to at least 20 minutes of cardiovascular exercise each day.

Strength Training

There are a wide range of options for creating a strength training routine in your home. A lot of exercises can be performed without any equipment, such as push-ups, body-weight squats and more. If you want to get more out of your home strength exercises, you can purchase equipment to use as resistance. Barbell weights are compact enough to be used in the smallest home gym and can be used in a variety of ways to boost your strength exercises.

Flexibility Training

This is an easy one. Flexibility routines from simple stretching to advanced yoga can be done almost anywhere. The benefits are clear: Flexibility training keeps us limber, increases circulation and improves the functionality of our muscles and joints. Stretching, yoga and tai chi are all great ways to work on your flexibility at home.

Does Variety in Exercise Matter?

It's fine to do a favorite activity over and over. But without some variety, you may be shortchanging yourself.

Exercisers who find one activity they love and do it again and again often wonder if they're missing out on anything by not mixing up their routines.

In some respects, variety is irrelevant. If you're exercising primarily to control your weight, for example, your goal is to burn more calories than you take in – how you do it is up to you. Burning 100 calories will contribute to your goal whether it's by running or by washing your car.

Beware of Boredom

But engaging in different exercises has advantages. The more you do, the greater the odds you'll find a way to exercise and not get bored. Switching between exercises also may reduce the risk of injuries from repeated stress on the same parts of the body.

Finally, regular participation in a variety of activities means that regardless of changing seasons, locales, availability of exercise buddies, etc., you're likely to find a way to keep exercising.

Different activities, different benefits

But the best argument for variety is the need to balance activities that offer different physical benefits – primarily, aerobic fitness and musculoskeletal fitness.

You'll build aerobic fitness by walking briskly, jogging, cycling, swimming and playing sports with at least moderate intensity, such as tennis, basketball and soccer. Aerobic fitness reduces risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, colon cancer and obesity.

Musculoskeletal fitness comes from resistance-training activities such as weight lifting and stretching. Its benefits are centered on enhanced performance, but it may also reduce the risk of some chronic diseases.

Aerobic and musculoskeletal fitness each help combat the loss of function that often accompanies aging. A fit, active way of life increases not only longevity, but also *quality* of life. You've heard it before, but it's true: Exercise adds years to your life and life to your years.

Stay Balanced

It is advised that exercisers engage in at least one aerobic activity and do some resistance exercise for musculoskeletal fitness, along with stretching to maintain joint flexibility. If there's one routine you like to do again and again in each category, that's OK. If you like to do different aerobic and musculoskeletal exercises at different times, all the better.

What really counts is to find the exercise program you like enough to stick with over time. Keep it up, and you'll reap the incredible benefits that come from a fit, active way of life.



Southwest Summer Stir Fry Makes 4 servings

Take advantage of sweet corn when it's in season. This easy recipe can be easily doubled for a larger gathering.

Ingredients

2 teaspoons olive oil
1 small zucchini, diced
1 green or red bell pepper, diced
1 small onion, diced
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 1/2 cups (7 1/2 oz/225 g) fresh corn kernels
(cut from 3 ears corn)
1 large vine-ripened tomato, peeled, seeded and diced
1 teaspoon honey
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon Tabasco, Texas Pete or other hot sauce
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro or parsley
2 tablespoons chopped dry-roasted peanuts, optional

Preparation

1. In a wok or large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add zucchini, green peppers and onions and cook, stirring, until the vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir in cumin. Add corn and cook until it is just tender, about 3 minutes. Stir in tomatoes, honey, salt and hot sauce and cook for 3 minutes. Remove from the heat. Stir in cilantro or parsley and sprinkle with peanuts, if using.



Nutritional info / serving

per serving
120 calories
3.2 g fat
0.4 g saturated fat
3.0 g protein
29 g carbohydrate
3.6 g fiber
191 mg sodium

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