

How to Change Bad Habits

How Can I Stay Motivated To Exercise?

Incorporate exercise into your lifestyle. Use stairs instead of elevators for short climbs. Perhaps you can save a few dollars and burn a few calories by sharing a walk with a friend instead of sharing a meal. That friend does not necessarily have to be the traditional two-legged kind. If you have a pet dog, for example, take it for a walk instead of just opening the back door. Another example: Instead of driving around the mall in search of that perfect parking spot closest to the entrance, park in the back where there are lots of open spots and enjoy an additional opportunity to exercise.

I'm Embarrassed To Go To The Gym

Nobody is born a bodybuilder. If you feel intimidated walking through the doors of health club, just remember that most people are busy looking at their own bodies. You're the only person looking at yours. You might want to visit a few fitness centers to find one that feels comfortable to you. Most clubs give you a trial workout. Use your free pass at a time when you would most likely exercise. You'll see who uses the gym at this time and how crowded it gets.

Can I Reward Myself For Sticking to My Plan?

Sure, though you might not want your reward to be a hot fudge sundae. Find rewards other than indulging in sweets. Perhaps new clothes to fit your new form.

Can I Skip A Workout?

Sure, though you might not want to make it easy on yourself. Once you are consistently working out, you will actually probably feel really guilty when you miss a workout. You will also notice what exercise does for you - gives you more energy and makes you feel more alive! It is normal, though, for people to get into a rut sometimes. If your muscles are fatigued and you think you're "burned out", go ahead and do one of two things - either change your routine (or even the type of exercises you do) or actually give your body a break by missing 1 or 2 workouts. Remember the positive things exercise has done for you (instead of focusing on the negative things like how much time it takes etc.) and you will always come back to it...

The benefits of habitual exercise include:

- Improves cardiac efficiency
- Improves capillary density in skeletal muscle
- Improves endurance during exercise
- Increases metabolism
- Counteracts obesity

- Increases the ratio of high-to-low-density lipoprotein cholesterol
- Improves the structure and function of ligaments, tendons and joints
- Increases muscle strength
- Reduces perceived exertion for given work rate
- Increases the release of endorphins
- Enhances tolerance to hot environments with a consequent increase in sweating
- Counteracts osteoporosis

The importance of a good work out cannot be overemphasized. There are many different approaches but the keys are consistency, frequency and repetition. It's okay to miss a workout or take a week off when you feel your workouts are not productive and your muscles are fatigued. Another trick is to just change your routine - change the exercises you do or just the order. A lifetime of exercise is one of the nicest things you can do for your body. You deserve it!