

New Year, New you!

Okay ...so you've made the New Years' resolution to get in-shape. Well done! You've made the first step to a **fitter, healthier, happier you**. Now let's see if we can help you get there.

The key to starting anything new is to understand why you are doing it. The main reason individuals want to get into shape is to lose weight. However, in order to help stay motivated, it is worth identifying two other reasons for getting in-shape. These can be as simple as increasing your energy levels, strengthening your immune system or preparing for a special event.

So how can I get started and stay motivated?

Why not try working out with a buddy? You will be able to support each other and ensure you don't take the easy option or miss a training session. Not to mention a little bit of competition is always a good incentive to keep going!

If you are pregnant or just had your baby, find a qualified instructor who understands the challenges placed on you with your new role. Sign up for a Pre or Post natal class, ensuring you will be exercising safely, while also meeting some like minded women. The benefits to you and baby will make a little effort worthwhile.

Get your family and friends on side. Tell them what you're trying to achieve and why. Their support will be invaluable, as they can keep you on track during those weeks where results are hard for you to see.

Sign up for a local event. It doesn't have to be a marathon! Start off with a walking event, or possibly a 5K run. Small, attainable goals will ensure success with your training program.

Ensure you set specific goals and review them weekly, keeping your results in a diary. Doing so will allow you to see your improvements at a glance. Document how you felt during and after your workout, as getting in shape is about more than just weight loss.

What will give me the fastest results?

There is no doubt that if you exercise every day, to the point of exhaustion, you will get results fast. However, you also increase the risk of injury, slowing you down in the long run.

For individuals new or returning to exercise after a period of six months or longer, **fun** is the most important element to maintaining an exercise program and achieving results. Exercise does not have to be "all-consuming and excruciating". Pick an activity you enjoy - try new things and you might be surprised! If you are not sure what is available in your area, drop in to your local gym or library. January is a great time to start a new class. Everyone will be in the same boat and you won't be the only newbie in the class.

However, exercise does not need to be confined to a class or a gym, and for the individual who dreads the very thought of exercising in front of people, the great outdoors provides the perfect environment to escape the scrutiny of others. It has been proven time and time again by research, that exercising outdoors is known to help boost your mental wellbeing. Just three long walks a week can reduce your hip and waist circumference and lower blood pressure (Preventative medicine 2007).

Regardless of how or where you choose to exercise, look at your food intake. On average, individuals in England gain 7lbs in weight over the Christmas period, not including any extra pounds

you might be carrying! It is easy to restrict your diet and drop your calorie intake to get results faster, but for most, it doesn't take long to revert to our normal eating pattern.

Get familiar with what's in your food - read the labels. Try and avoid foods high in saturated or hydrogenated fats. According to the American Heart Association, an individual on a calorie intake of 2000kcal per day should consume no more than 16g of **saturated** fat a day.

Food tips:

Pick one, small, nutritional goal you know you can maintain - healthy snacks instead of biscuits.

Try to eat meals earlier in the evening. Did you know that body fat is only used for energy when your body has nothing else to do? Eating meals late in the evening means that your body still has to digest your food, reducing your fat burning time while asleep.

Turn the TV off and loose more weight. Eating in front of the TV can increase the number of calories you get by 71% (Mel Kemp, Health tutor)

Some of the reasons we fail with any weight loss goals are because we:

- over estimate the calories burned while exercising;
- under estimate the amount of calories taken in;
- replace calories lost during exercise with a post exercise food reward;
- begin an exercise plan which is unrealistic to maintain with our lifestyle and fitness level.

After all, we didn't become out of shape over night! A slow start with a gradual progression will help you to reach your goals while integrating exercise into your daily routine. To find out more about calories burnt during exercise visit www.weightlossforgood.co.uk.

Here are some easy ways to fit exercise into your routine:

1. Taking the stairs instead of the lift.
2. Park at the far end of the car park.
3. Instead of parking beside your children's school, park a few streets away and walk – this will help congestion as well as giving you extra minutes to spend with your child.
4. Instead of taking a trolley around the supermarket for a quick shop, pick up a basket and use this as a mini weight workout, lifting and setting down basket when choosing food.
5. Why not hit the dance floor with some friends – burn calories while you socialise!
6. Undertake half an hour of gardening a couple of times a week.

So if like last year you have made the resolution to get in-shape and lose weight, why not make this the year that you succeed. Begin slowly by making one small nutritional change, and introducing one small fitness goal. Keep a diary of these, and as you reach them, set some new goals. Before you know it summer will be here and everyone will be admiring a **fitter, healthier, happier you**.

Good Luck!

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