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Introduction

More than any other time in history, people are all vying to have the best, healthiest body possible. The health and fitness industries are making billions of dollars every year on herbal supplements, fitness equipment, gyms, and special diets. If you watch TV or read magazines, there is always some intriguing commercial asking for money to help you get into shape.

While many of these options are good and healthy, others you should stay as far away from as possible. Recently, a professional baseball player died at the age of 23. In his locker, a bottle was discovered containing Ephedrine. The FDA just issued a warning that people need to heed.

Now that you have made a commitment to take care of your body, both internal and external, it is critical to your overall health that you do it the right way. Here are some tips for both health and fitness that will help you lose weight, discover ways to maintain a better healthy lifestyle, and be in the best shape of your life – all the smart way!

For sake of clarity, we have broken this down into two categories. One for health, which focuses on herbal supplements, weight loss, dieting, rest, and everything you need to know about taking care of your body on the inside.

The other section is fitness, which has both internal and external benefits. On the outside, fitness includes weight lifting, running, sports, walking, things you can do to enhance, tone, and build muscle. However, fitness also has benefits for the inside such as great cardiovascular benefits among others.

HEALTH

First, we will start out with Health:

1. Acupuncture

The use of acupuncture dates back more than 2,000 years. This is a traditional medicine of Japan, China, and other Eastern countries. The use of acupuncture is beneficial in that it stimulates areas of the body that have a direct correlation to internal organs. By placing fine needles into specific points, the body is encouraged to promote natural healing, improve function, and provide an overall boost to your system. When these needles are inserted, they go into Meridians, which are channels somewhat like streams within the body. Just as there might be a boulder sitting in a stream blocking the flow of water, it can be the same for the channels of blood in your system. Acupuncture helps to remove these obstacles by providing stimulation, thus improving health.

— Biofeedback

Biofeedback is a method used to help blood pressure, muscle tension, heart rates, brain activity, and other bodily functions. Basically, biofeedback is a painless system that is hooked up to your body and then through electrical signals received from tightening of your muscles, you would be able to receive those signals by a light telling you that you are tightening your muscles. This in turn trains you to be aware of when you are bringing on stress and to help you identify when you need to relax your body. Biofeedback is very successful and can be used for migraine headaches, chronic pain, high blood pressure, epilepsy, and much more, which can occur when you tense up.

— Therapeutic Massage

You might be thinking what does getting a massage do for my health other than to make me feel good. Actually, therapeutic massage has many benefits. For example, it can help alleviate pain, reduce stress, and promote good health. When a person gets a therapeutic massage, they are actually getting the benefit of function improvement with circulatory, muscular, skeletal, nervous systems, lymphatic, and can even help the body heal after an illness or injury. Depending on what the specific health issue, there is a Swedish Massage, which is a more relaxing massage good for headaches, back stress, and muscle cramps, Pressure Point Therapy, helpful for some injuries as well as circulation problems, headache and muscle tension, insomnia, anxiety, and more. Finally, Sports Massage focuses on muscle groups used for different sports. Licensed masseuse

can help with the issues mentioned as well as allergies, arthritis, asthma, carpal tunnel syndrome, depression, digestive disorders, myofascial pain, limited range of motion, sinusitis, and TMJ. The next time you tell someone you are going to get a massage, you can simply explain that it is for the benefit of your health.

– Eat Less Later in the Day

Everyone knows, whether they want to admit it or not, reducing calories will help you to lose weight. However, just as you should reduce the calorie intake, you need to know when to eat. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day and the one meal that should not be missed. Lunch should be healthy but a less than what you ate for breakfast. As you approach dinner, eat healthy but light. Avoid after dinner snacks or eating before bed!

– Saucy but Healthy

Eating bland foods is boring, unsatisfying, and if that is what your diet consists of, more than likely, you will be off it shortly after you start. If you enjoy good tasting food, some sauces and spices can enhance your food while not adding calories to your food. The next you grill meat, consider using one of these:

- Reduced-salt Soy Sauce
- Mustard
- Salsa
- Worcestershire Sauce
- Vinegar (this comes in wonderful flavors)
- Teriyaki Sauce
- Tomato Sauce
- Hot Sauce

– Supplements and Vitamins

While some supplements and vitamins on the market are not worth buying and some, such as Ephedrine, have been proven dangerous, other sources are healthy. Most important, you need to understand what it is you are taking, and strictly follow dosage just as you would medication that has been prescribed. If you are unsure, check with your physician, a nutritionist, or a reputable health food store. Many supplements that are good for overall health include grape seed extract, Glucosamine, aloe vera, and Selenium. Vitamins to consider would include Vitamin E, Vitamin C, B-12, Iron, Magnesium, and Calcium.

– Eliminate Stress

You have probably heard this before. Stress is a key contributor to poor health. Study after study has found that when a person is stressed, the body reacts. The result of stress could be high-blood pressure, tension headaches, upset stomachs, poor posture, and so on. Keeping stress in check will help you manage your overall health much better.

– ZZZZZZZZZZZZ

Does sleep really affect health? You bet it does. During sleep, your body is resting and recovering from all the work it has done throughout the day. Your serotonin levels are brought back in line, your muscles relax, and mind is allowed to clear itself in preparation for the next day. If you are not getting the proper amount of sleep, you will notice it in a physical way. While there is no magic number, usually between six and eight hours a night is appropriate. If you have difficulty getting to sleep, before you climb into bed, try Yoga, listening to soft, relaxing music, a glass of wine, or if you can talk someone into it, a good massage.

– Laugh it Off

The medical field has proven that laughter actually works with your body toward good health. Have you ever heard the expression, “Laughter is the best medicine”? The truth is, when you laugh, several positive things happen. Your muscles relax; stress hormone production is reduced; you forget about pain; your body’s immune system is improved; high-blood pressure is lowered; the heart and lungs are strengthened; and overall, you feel better!

– Nutrition

People often confuse “dieting” with nutrition. Your body needs to have nutrients replaced, whether through foods being eaten or supplements. Do you remember what you learned in elementary school about the four major food groups? As adult, eating balanced meals from these groups still applies. It is important to remove the “junk food” from your diet and stick with healthy foods. If you do not like certain things such as fruits or vegetables, be sure you are taking a supplement to get the nutrients needed. Another consideration is if you are a vegetarian. There are certain benefits taken from meat such as iron and B-12 that you should consider taking a supplement for in exchange for the meat.

– Yoga

The practice of Yoga is actually a spiritual practice. However, with the many benefits received it has quickly become a popular choice to thousands of people strictly for health. Yoga helps stretch out muscles and ligaments, tone the body, and the greatest benefit is that it helps to clear the mind. Having a clear mind works toward a healthy body.

– Stop Smoking

You have probably heard this more times, than you can count but facts are facts! There is no other way to say it – smoking is not only bad for your health, it is deadly! One woman in her late thirties had smoked for 10 years. She had tried everything from watering down her cigarettes, throwing them away, wearing a patch, chewing gum, you name it, she tried it. She really wanted to quit but the addiction was so strong she was finding it impossible.

The mother of an 11-year old daughter and a 13-year old son, she was taken by surprise when something happened that made her quit smoking in one day. Her son told her that he had something very important to tell her. With a quick response of, “Okay, what is it?” he said, “No, I really need to talk to you.” She knew by the look on his face and the tone of his voice that this was something important. Her son looked her square in the face and without wavering said, “I want you to quit smoking because I don’t want you to die. I want a mother in my life.” With that, she walked over to an ashtray, put out her cigarette, and now almost seven years later, she still does not smoke. While this will not work for everyone, the next time you pick up a cigarette; take a minute to consider how your child or family would feel if you were no longer around.

– Mixing Medications

Many people do not realize how dangerous mixing medications can be. In fact, some combinations are lethal. If you are on medication, make sure your physician knows everything you take, including herbs and supplements. To take it one-step further, when you have a new prescription filled, ask the pharmacist if there are any bad interactions with your other current medication.

– Drink Wisely

There is nothing wrong with a couple of social drinks or a glass of wine or beer with dinner, but if you drink, you need to be wise. First, if you drink to the point of being drunk, keep in mind that you are causing damage to your

liver. Second, if you drink, NEVER drink and drive.

– Young at Heart

Regardless of your age, if you start acting too old, you will actually not benefit yourself at all. Studies have shown that people who act old, feel old, and can actually suffer from problems before their time. Do not be afraid to be youthful, within reason. The next time you see a man in his seventies running a marathon or a woman keeping up in aerobic class, you can see that by refusing to give into age, they are healthier and live much longer lives.

– Regular Checkups

It is crucial that you have regular checkups, which could include mammograms, pap smears, checks for colon cancer, EKGs, etc. Many times, a regular checkup could have caught something earlier on, actually saving a life. If you do not feel good, have your doctor check things out. If you are due for your annual mammogram, have it done. You could possibly be saving your own life.

– Cholesterol Levels

High cholesterol leads to hardening of arteries, which in turn, leads to heart disease or attack. Keep your intake of food healthy, limit the amount of sugar you eat, and have your cholesterol checked. If it is higher than 200, ask your doctor for ways to reduce it.

– Meditate

Find some time away from noise and distractions for you. Meditation can come in many forms. Whatever way you meditate, ensure that you are in a quiet place with soft lighting, sit with good posture and in a comfortable position, practice slow, rhythmic breathing, and concentrate on something calm and relaxing. Meditation is a great stress reducer, which is vital for good health.

– Listen to ME

If you know that you are not feeling “right” but the doctor tells you everything is fine, listen to your body. There is nothing wrong with getting a second opinion. If you are not comfortable with the doctor’s advice, get another exam. In addition, if you go to a doctor who tells you that what you feel is in your head, or you are crazy, get out of there immediately. You know your

body better than anyone does and you need a doctor that believes in you and offers the right kind of support and encouragement.

– Body Fat

When you think about losing weight, more importantly than weight is the amount of fat you are carrying around. This fat is measured with what is called Body Mass Index, or BMI. For women, if you are fit, your percent of body fat should range from 21% to 31%. If you are in incredible shape, that could be as low as 10%. For men, fit should be between 14% and 25%, and excellent shape, as low as 2%.

To calculate your body fat, write down how much you weigh (be honest – no one will see this but you). Multiply your weight by 703. Next, write down your height, in inches. Multiply by that same number. Then you will divide your weight number by your height number. That is your BMI. For example, if your weight were 150 pounds x 703, your weight answer would be 105,450. If your height is 5'4", that would be 64 inches x 64 for a total of 4,096. Taking the 105,450 divided by 4,096, you come out with a BMI of 25.7.

– Read the Label

Get into a habit of reading the labels on food. While they may have messages such as “Low Fat” or “Reduced Calorie” written all over the front of the package or can, when you read the label and understand what you are looking for, you will probably be surprised. Regardless of what the claim may be, the label may tell another story. The FDA provides these important guidelines, therefore, should be what you look for. If the message and label do not jive, move on to a different product.

Fat-Free	Less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving, with no added fat or oil
Low fat	3 grams or less of fat per serving
Less fat	25% or less fat than the comparison food
Saturated Fat Free	Less than 0.5 grams of saturated fat and 0.5 grams of trans-fatty acids per serving
Cholesterol-Free	Less than 2 mg cholesterol per serving, and 2 grams or less saturated fat per serving
Low Cholesterol	20 mg or less cholesterol per serving and 2 grams or less saturated fat per serving
Reduced Calorie	At least 25% fewer calories per serving than the comparison food
Low Calorie	40 calories or less per serving
Extra Lean	Less than 5 grams of fat, 2 grams of saturated fat, and 95 mg of cholesterol per (100 gram) serving of meat, poultry or seafood
Lean	Less than 10 grams of fat, 4.5 g of saturated fat, and 95 mg of cholesterol per (100 gram) serving of meat, poultry or seafood
Light (fat)	50% or less of the fat than in the comparison food (ex: 50% less fat than our regular cheese)

Light (calories)	1/3 fewer calories than the comparison food
High-Fiber	5 grams or more fiber per serving
Sugar-Free	Less than 0.5 grams of sugar per serving
Sodium-Free or Salt-Free	Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
Low Sodium	140 mg or less per serving
Very Low Sodium	35 mg or less per serving

– **Water**

Water is excellent for the body and good health. Water helps flush out toxins and other unwanted things lingering in the body. Water also replenishes fluids that help lubricate the internal body, keeps you hydrated, reduces hunger, which helps with weight loss, and helps to make skin look smooth and young. If you are not used to drinking water, it may seem hard at first, but very quickly, you will enjoy the clean, refreshed way it makes you feel. At a minimum, you should drink 64-ounces a day and more if you can.

– **Seatbelts**

You may be wondering what seatbelts have to do with health. Statistics show that wearing seatbelts keeps you safe and therefore allows you to live longer. To keep yourself safe and healthy, it is critical that you buckle up every time you get in *any* car. Do not be fooled into thinking that going the few blocks to the corner store is not big deal. Most accidents happen close to home so whether you are traveling one block or across the country, buckle up.

– **Do Not Forget the Teeth**

Often the care of teeth and gums is overlooked as potential health risks. However, with the oral cavity being the main way in which parasites, bacteria, yeast, and fungus get into the body, taking time to thoroughly brush and floss your teeth is important. Keeping your mouth clean is a great way to benefit your health.

– **Attitude**

A negative attitude can have a negative impact on your health just as a positive attitude can affect your health in a positive manner. Living well has a direct correlation with a positive outlook. Keep smiling and try to find the good in life, even when things are tough.

– Fighting Cancer

With today's breakthroughs, there are many innovative ways to fight cancer. Although you may find this difficult to believe, the American Institute for Cancer Research has come up with a surprising way to fight cancer. After conducting thorough studies, researchers found that drinking tea, which contains antioxidants to help neutralize "free radicals" helps to fight cancer. While it is not a cure-all, if cancer runs in your family, it certainly will not hurt to add tea to your daily consumption.

– Be Careful with the Sun

Everyone loves basking in the warm sun, especially if it is lying on a beautiful sandy beach. While the sun has many benefits, too much sun without proper protection can be harmful. Being sunburned not only hurts, but also damages skin and promotes wrinkles and cancer. If you are going to spend any time in the sun, even 10 minutes, protect your skin with sunscreen for both UVA and UVB rays.

– Tasty Almonds

If you love nuts, then you are in luck. Almonds are not only delicious and make a great snack food, medical studies show they contain as much protein per ounce as red meat. In addition, they aid in reducing the risk of heart attacks by up to 50%. The next time you need something crunchy, reach for a handful of almonds.

– Wash your Hands

This is something you have probably heard your whole life. Disease is easily spread from touch, whether from person to person or object to person. Giardia is the number one germ that is transferred from touching something infected. Once you have Giardia, you can get very ill. In addition, germs can be passed from your pet that has been rolling on the grass, something dropped on a dirty floor, just allow your imagination to roam if you dare. Washing your hands is a quick, easy way to reduce the spread of germs.

– Flaxseed

A great way to maintain a healthy cardiovascular system is by adding flaxseed to your daily diet. Flaxseed actually contains what is called alpha-linolenic acid, which is a fatty acid essential in controlling blood pressure. They have a benefit of helping with digestion; just make sure the flaxseed is crushed for easier consumption and absorption.

– Give your Eyes a Rest

Most jobs in today's society require the use of a computer. If you sit in front of a computer all day or work any job or hobby that requires your eyes to work hard, be sure to take breaks throughout your day. For soothing relief, you can use eye drops, close your eyes for a few minutes to allow them to rest, and look away to something other than what you are working on. Also, ensure that you are working with appropriate lighting, which is an oversight many people make. These are ways in which to give your eyes a much-needed break. Eyestrain can cause eye problems as well as headaches.

– Watch the Sugar

Often people think by drinking fruit juices or eating low-fat fruit roll-ups and such, they are cutting out or eliminating sugar. The fact is that some fruit juices have more sugar than a soda. Reduction of sugar is important to good health; therefore always check out the sugar content of anything you put in your mouth, even if it appears to be healthy.

– Throw out the Scales

If you have bathroom scales, you should either get rid of them or put them away for a while. Weight does not accurately reflect the level of your fitness. If you should be measuring anything, it should be body fat, not the weight.

– Sunscreen

Most people know that sunscreen is important for shoulders, backs, legs, and arms when out in the sun but there are other parts of the body that are often overlooked. When enjoying the beautiful sun, be sure to use sunscreen on your ears, slaps, and even the tops of your feet as well!

– Aspirin versus Ibuprofen

Both of these products can help in certain situations. For example, aspirin is an analgesic, used for pain while ibuprofen is both an analgesic and anti-inflammatory. Therefore, the next time you have to deal with sore muscles after a good workout, remember that you can get some needed relief from these over the counter remedies.

– Berries, Berries, Berries

Ah, the sweet taste of fresh berries! Berries are actually good for you and contain plant nutrients called anthocyanidins. These are incredible antioxidants and some have high levels of resveratrol, which helps fight heart disease and cancer. The next time you want something sweet, juicy, and good for you, reach for blueberries, grapes, or strawberries, and do not feel guilty!

– Some like it Hot

Hot, spicy foods that contain curry, chilies, or other hot peppers such as cayenne, help to trigger endorphins. These hormones are what make people feel good and well balanced. In fact, endorphins are like a natural morphine that helps ease pain and provide a sense of well being. The next time you are feeling a little down or have some minor pain, try eating something spicy.

– Beware of Allergies/Reactions

Pay attention to what you eat. With so many wonderful restaurants, trying new dishes is exciting and fun. However, several foods are responsible for up to 90% of all allergy problems. If you notice after eating certain foods you suffer from headaches, upset stomach, or other problems, make note, you could be having an allergic reaction. The foods most likely the problem include eggs, milk, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, shellfish, and fish. For children, the common foods include cow's milk, soy, eggs, and wheat.

– Breast Exams

Make sure you conduct regular breast examines. This can quickly and painlessly be done during your shower or lying down when going to bed. Contact your primary physician or gynecologist for a free pamphlet showing the proper way this is done. Taking proactive steps could save your life.

– Asthmatics and Sports

If you suffer from asthma, you already know that some sports should be avoided, depending on the severity. If you have trouble on a daily basis and love sports, be encouraged to know that some sports are asthma-friendly and in fact, can be helpful in that they help make the lungs stronger. These sports include swimming, cycling, and fishing, walking, and canoeing. Again, check with your physician before getting involved with any sport if you have a health condition.

– Fragrance and Aging

If you want to do everything you can to age gracefully, you should avoid anything that has the perfumes or lotions of coconut oil and orange. The reason is that these fragrances contain a substance called psoralen, which is known to speed up the aging process.

– Circulation and Lymph Glands

When you finish with your bath or shower, you can actually help your body's circulation and improvement in which lymph glands drain, all by the way that you towel off your body. Very simply, when drying your arms and legs as well as torso, always towel away toward the groin for your legs and toward your armpits for the arms and torso. This might sound funny, but studies have shown this works.

– Make Time for Intimacy

If you are married, be sure to make time for intimacy in your relationship. Sex is a great stress reducer and keeps a marriage happy. Sex is healthy act that should be enjoyed.

– No More Caffeine

Caffeine can dehydrate your body so try to remove it from your daily intake. This may require some weaning, but when done, you will feel better. If you feel that you need something, instead of grabbing a cup of caffeinated coffee or soda, try drinking herbal tea.

– Stick with Whole Wheat

Whole wheat is actually better for you. It offers more fiber, which helps reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, diverticulosis, diabetes to name a few. When possible, set aside the white flour and bread and reach for products that are made from oats, barley, buckwheat, bulgur, rye, brown rice, millet, and wheat.

– What are Flavonoids?

These are oestrogen-like compounds found in plants that act as hormone blockers any place in the body where there are excess hormones that could cause such cancers such as breast cancer. Flavonoids are also strong

antioxidants, which can be found in foods such as beans, onions, broccoli, apples, and soy products.

– **Green Tea**

Studies have shown that adding green tea to your daily diet provides several health benefits to include the metabolizing of fat, ease of digestion, and is a good source of flavonoids. Another benefit is that tea is a form of natural diuretic, which is very mild and not harmful.

– **Sodium**

As a way of reducing blood pressure, which is bad on the heart, reduce the amount of sodium (salt) you intake. You may be thinking of table salt but you should know that many canned vegetables, soups, even soda, are very high in sodium. Look at your labels and try to cut back on processed foods. If you have a craving for salt, switch to natural seasoning and just a little salt.

– **Family History**

If you are not sure what your family history is in relation to health, now is a good time to find out. This can be especially true if you are adopted or disconnected from immediately family members. There might be certain types of cancer, diabetes, asthma, or other illnesses that you could get a jump on if you knew they were prevalent in your family. Once you discover any risks, talk with your physician for recommendations.

– **Puffy Eyes**

If you battle with puffy eyes or dark circles that make you look worn out, do not feel alone. This is actually a very common complaint that can be treated easily. By using a mixture of Vitamin C ester and alpha-lipoic acid eye therapy, you will find that this antibiotic helps reduce this puffiness.

– **Control those Cravings**

If you are like any other person on the face of the planet, you have cravings for sweet foods. To help with these cravings, you can use Normoglycaemia to help normalize your blood glucose levels. This supplement is very rich in magnesium, B Vitamins, and Chromium and has been proven successful for many years.

FITNESS

Fitness is just as important as health, and in reality, fitness correlates directly with our health. If we are not taking care of our bodies, we get sick. Here are some great recommendations to keep fit:

— Bicycling

When you ask many adults when the last time they rode a bike is, they cannot answer. Although bicycling is a favorite pastime, many adults do not take advantage of this great option for exercise. Not only does bike riding exercise the body and build a stronger cardiovascular system, it allows you to get out and enjoy nature, fresh air, and see new sites.

— Jogging or Walking

Both jogging and walking are GREAT ways to get fit. Not only do they tone the muscles, relieve stress, create a healthier heart, and improve lung capability, they make you look wonderful, which in turns helps you get excited about doing other exercise for fitness.

— Swimming

Swimming is an excellent way to get into and stay in shape. If you do not own a pool, many high schools have aquatic centers, or there is always the YWCA or YMCA, or your local gym. Many offer water aerobic classes that will help you tighten your body, lose weight, and get a good overall workout.

— Tennis Anyone

Tennis is not only a fun sport, but also a great way to exercise. You do not have to be a Venice Williams to play; in fact, you do not even have to be good. Just running after the ball alone will help get you into shape. This is a great way to strengthen your cardiovascular system and lose weight. You can find tennis courts in just about every city and if you would like to play but have no idea how, lessons are reasonable.

— Dancing

Dancing is so much fun and whether you enjoy a slow, Ballroom dance or a nightclub packed with people all moving to heart-pumping techno, as long as you are moving, it really does not matter what type of dance or music. The whole idea is to move your body. Dancing has long been recommended as an avenue to fitness.

– VCR

If you have a VCR or DVD, rather than just using it for your favorite comedy or action-packed movie, try sticking in some good workout tapes. Even taking 15 minutes every day to workout will get you started. Try that for two weeks and you will be surprised at the results. Once you see that 15 minutes a day makes a difference, you will be encouraged to increase the time spent.

– Abdominal Crunches

While you may not end up with a washboard stomach, you can do some things to get your abdomen in better shape. Crunches have long been a favorite for many athletes for the very reason that they work. Lying on your back with knees bent, keeping feet flat on the floor, cross your hands across your chest and then curl your torso, rolling from your sternum toward your hips. Do this slowly and start out with a set of ten crunches in three reps. In other words, do ten crunches, wait a minute, do ten more, wait a minute, and then do the final ten. As you get accustomed to these, you can increase both the number of sets and reps.

– Squats

Squats are excellent for glutes, hamstrings, quads, and calves. With your feet standing firm and spread apart about two feet, bend your knees slightly. Then, very smoothly, you will squat toward the floor without going all the way down. This usually takes some practice but within a short period, you will enjoy the benefits.

– Tricep Press

Having firm arms is something that many people focus on when exercising. For an Overhead Tricep Press, standing on the floor with your feet about two feet apart, knees slightly bent, you will extend your arms over your head. Keep your elbows locked and then very slowly lower your hands behind your head. You want to do this with some type of weight, but small weights like one to five pounds. If you do not have weights of your own, you can hold a one-pound of vegetables, which will work perfectly.

– Get to the Gym

Working out at home is a good option and for some people, they are committed enough to actually make it work. However, for the majority of

people wanting to get into shape, the inspiration, competitiveness, and encouragement received from working out in a gym is the way to go. Although it will require a small investment, make the decision to find a gym that offers state-of-the-art equipment, qualified staff, and fun classes where you can enjoy working out.

– **Eat More**

Before you get too excited, understand that when you eat, it is not how much you eat, but what you eat. If you find that getting fit and eating less food is too hard, add more of the right food into your diet. Great options include an orange, hard-boiled egg, small broiled chicken breast, and fresh vegetables such as carrots, celery sticks. If you have a craving for something sweet, many delicious options are available such as Weight Watchers cheesecake or Chocolate Éclairs. Getting fit does not mean total deprivation.

– **Network at the Gym**

Getting to the gym is a great way to get fit. However, there are other benefits to going to the gym. You will have the opportunity to expand your social ring by making new friends, all working to get fit just like you. This will provide needed encouragement, which in turn helps you to stay motivated.

– **Tight Muscles**

In addition to a good aerobic exercise, you should add weight training in, which will help balance out the fitness routine and provide you with the best results. If you are not sure where to start, a professional trainer can help get you started on a healthy program.

– **Heat Therapy**

Using heat therapy is a great way to reduce long-term effects or injury for overworked muscles. If you have sore muscles and joints, use heat to help increase blood flow, relieve muscle spasms, and increase joint mobility.

– **Before it's a Problem**

Instead of taking an injury through rehabilitation after it is an injury, why not rehab before. You can actually take preventative measures before you indulge in a sport or activity by ensuring you stretch properly. This will help strengthen as well as stretch muscles, which in turn, helps reduce

unnecessary injuries.

– Running in the Sand

If you live in a geographical area, where you have the luxury of sandy beaches, and if you are in the process of rehabilitating your knees, ankles, and even some injuries to the back, you should avoid running in the sand during this time. The reason is that running on sand actually produces greater force on the joints.

– Quick Energy

Listen to your body. If you find that you are dragging, eat the right foods that will give your body the energy needed and are healthy. Examples of these foods include carrots, rice cakes, breakfast cereals, bananas, and potatoes.

– Quality Matters

While finding that great bargain on poorly made running or training shoes may be tempting, it would be far better to put your workout on hold for a couple of weeks while you save the money needed to purchase a good pair. That does not mean you have to pay a fortune, but always ensure you are working out with the proper shoes. Wearing shoes that have a poor design or poor durability can actually cause injury.

– Get Ready to Run

Before any workout, always warm up. If you are a runner, before you go out for your actual run, take two to five minutes to jog in place to prepare. You will find that you have a better run.

– Increased Protein

Many diets of today's society pull you back and forth, one telling you to eat more protein, and one less. The fact is that if you are not exercising as much as you used to or if you are exercising heavily, your body could in fact need more protein than what the RDA recommends. The good balance for either scenario is 50% to 60% carbohydrates, 20% to 25% protein and 20% or less of fat. If you stick with this equation, you will benefit.

– Asthma and Exercise

If you have asthma and love to exercise, it is important to keep your inhaler with you. However, if for some reason you forget, remember that caffeine can provide temporary relieve of bronchial constriction. If you do not have asthma but after years of running, you develop breathing problems, you could be suffering from “Exercise Induced Asthma”, which should be mentioned to your physician.

– **Resistance**

The next time you work out try adding some resistance to your routine. You can use special rubber bands or other devices designed specifically as a way to help you with isometrics, thus get better results.

– **Taking a Break**

If you are actively involved in a workout regimen but you are getting ready to go on vacation for two weeks or have an extra heavy workload for your job over the next couple of weeks, instead of just stopping your routine completely during that time, just cut back. Even reducing your workout by 50% will give you the break you need but also make it much easier to get back to full speed than if you just stopped altogether.

– **Exercise and Summer**

Exercising outdoors can be refreshing and fun but it can also cause problems if you do not follow some simple rules. Make sure you are drinking enough water, about 16 ounces every 30 minutes, before, during, and after exercise. Some sports drinks such as PowerAid and GatorAid have special ingredients that help replenish fluids to prevent dehydration.

– **Be Realistic**

It would be great to be able to jump right into a hard workout, feel great, and see instant results. However, it is important to be realistic about several things. First, you need to understand that you more than likely will not (or should not) start out with a hard workout if you have not been in a regular exercise routine. Start out slow and do not set yourself up for failure by expecting miracles overnight. Getting fit takes time and with commitment, you will reach your goals.

– **Envision Success**

Try to envision how great you will look and feel once you get in shape. If you can, find a picture of someone that has the same body type and pin it

up where you can look at it every day to help you see the same results you too can reach with hard work and time.

– Pregnancy and Exercise

Do not think that just because you are pregnant means you have to stop exercising, unless you have special needs. Before you exercise during pregnancy, always check with your doctor first. Once you get permission to proceed, you will find that leg extensions, standing curls, and other exercises can be done with ease. If you are not sure what you can and cannot do, ask your doctor for recommendations.

– Track Progress

Often when trying to get in shape, it seems like you are working hard and sweating, but getting nowhere. In actuality, things are happening, just not yet seen. Keep track of two things in particular. First, track your measurements. You will probably be surprised within only a few weeks at the progress made. Second, track your routines so you can determine what is working for you and what is not as successful.

– Medication and Exercise

If you are on scheduled prescription medication, you should know that some drugs could have a negative affect if mixed with exercise. Some can cause the heart to work too hard or you might not sweat as needed, to mention a few. If you are taking medication, before you start any exercise program, consult with your physician to ensure there are no harmful effects.

– Cool Down

Just as warming up for exercise is important, cooling down after exercise is just as important. Once you have completed your workout, take five to 10 minutes to walk, or stretch to allow your body to cool down. This is very important for the muscles and joints and for the heart and lung.

– Walk the Dog

Instead of just opening the back door to let the dogs out, put them on a leash and go for a nice walk. They will appreciate the new scenery and you are doing yourself a great justice.

– Lunchtime

Instead of eating a heavy lunch, put together something light and easy and go for a walk. You can sip on a protein drink or snack on fruit while enjoying a nice brisk walk before heading back to the office. You will feel refreshed and more invigorated for your afternoon tasks.

– Bowling

Get some exercise by joining a bowling league. You can find a league for just about every level of bowler as well as any day and time of the week. This is a great way to get out and have some fun while also exercising. Yes, bowling does count as exercising.

– Set Goals

Set a goal for yourself, perhaps four to six weeks. By breaking up your time into workable chunks of time instead of looking out an entire year, you will have a much easier time meeting your goals and staying on track as well as encouraged.

– Neurobics

This is a new term coined by researchers from the United States relating to ways in which to get the brain activated with its own biochemical pathways. The goal is to have the brain strengthened and energetic. Positive thinking has long been proven to help with illness and disease so the theory is that an energetic mind is also good for fitness.

– Fitness and Food

Certain foods provide specific benefits for people who workout. If you need quick energy or planning to run a 4K or 10K and need to accelerate your metabolism, bread, grain-based food, sugar, and honey are great choices. If your goal is to burn fat, you should eat peas, oat bran, pasta, rice, beans, lentils, and soya beans.

– Interval Training

As a way to improve your fitness in a speedy manner and lose weight, try interval training. This means that you where your workout intensity varies. This is beneficial to your workout and fights workout boredom.

– After Exercise

When you have completed your exercise regimen, instead of eating carbohydrates, grab some fresh fruit or water. The reason is that for a minimum of an hour after exercise, the body is still breaking down fat. You need to allow the body to finish doing its job.

– Breath in – Breath out

You might wonder what breathing has to do with fitness and the truth is it has a lot to do with it. When exercising, there is a proper way to breath that will help you with the appropriate amount of oxygen into the system but will also help you with endurance. For example, marathon runners will tell you that they use a rhythm when running that allows them to runner longer and healthier than normal breathing.

– Circle of Friends

When trying to get into shape, it is important to have family and friends in support. This means they need to respect your goals and not offer you wrong foods, or try to pull you away from your exercise program. Explain to them how important this is to you and that you need their encouragement.

– Know your Age

While you are only as old as you feel, keep in mind that young people can very easily leap over an obstacle in the garage or take a nice jog through the neighborhood with no problem. However, as people age, it is crucial to stay fit and healthy and pay attention to your age. Something that might have been easy for you when you were young may now cause injury or illness. If you find you can no longer perform one activity, do not be discouraged; just substitute one activity for another.

– Diabetes and Exercise

Aerobic exercise can actually be beneficial for people with diabetes. This exercise increases the insulin sensitivity and when combined with good eating, can help restore a normal glucose metabolism. Before starting into a workout program, you need to see your doctor first to determine if there are any risks for coronary artery disease and that your blood glucose control is appropriate for exercise. Once cleared, you will feel better and see for you the benefits associated with exercise.

– Golf Injuries

While golf is not a high impact sport, injuries can still occur. One such injury associated with golf is torn rotator cuffs. To avoid this from happening to you, it is important to keep your muscles strengthened and flexible. Simple stretching can help tremendously. When you stretch, take it slow, only going to a point of mild tension. Each stretch should be held for 20 to 40 seconds with smooth motion (no bouncing). Just as it is important to stretch before you golf, it is equally as important to stretch after golf.

– Stretch the Mind

When you stretch your body in preparation for exercise as well as after exercise, you need to stretch your mind as well. You might be wondering how and why. When your mind is relaxed, your body follows. To achieve a relaxed mind, listen to soothing music, relax your breathing, and use visualization techniques such as Yoga. Another exercise discipline that are very popular and works is the Pilates program.

– Proper Equipment

Okay, the scenario is that you have made your New Year's resolution and are determined to get into shape. Too embarrassed to head to the gym just yet, you make the decision to purchase some equipment such as a Nordic Trac or treadmill to get in better shape before being seen in public. While that is a common occurrence, it is important to make sure you buy the right equipment and equipment in good working order. Many people will sell equipment at a huge discount in the local paper, making the buy look too good to pass up. However, while most are honest sales, some are selling the equipment because it does not work or something is wrong with it. This could lead to further injury so when buying from a private party, bring someone with you who knows about workout equipment or contact the maker of that particular piece of equipment and ask them what to look for to ensure you are buying a good piece of equipment.

– Beauty is Skin Deep

Accept the fact that everyone's body is built different and when God created you, He did not make a mistake. When you see the models and Hollywood stars on the cover of those glamour magazines, keep in mind that every one of those photographs have been airbrushed, meaning they really do not look like that. While they make look fantastic either way, you are not those people - you are you! Always love yourself for who you are inside. As long as you are eating right, exercising, and doing the best for yourself, then you

should be happy. You may never reach that model appearance and to be honest, you do not want to. Do the best you can and love the inside beauty more than the outside beauty!

– **Built-in Air-Conditioner**

Your body was created with a built in cooling system, called sweat or if you prefer, perspiration. On television and in magazines, you will find numerous advertisements encouraging deodorant for exercise when in actuality; sweat is a vital key in a good workout. When your body heats up do to exertion, sweat is doing the job intended – keeping the body cool. Therefore, do not try to squelch sweating, accept it.

– **Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke**

Heat-related illnesses can be a common occurrence when exerting energy in the outdoors or poorly ventilated indoors. Two primary contributors can be alcohol consumption and not enough water. Three types of illness include heat cramps, which are very painful and might be combined with headache or nausea, heat exhaustion, which is more serious and includes vomiting, chills, headache, dizziness, among other symptoms, and heatstroke, which is the most dangerous and if not caught and treated immediately, can be fatal or lead to permanent brain damage or coma. For all three of these, particularly the last two, the best action is prevention. If you notice that your heart starts beating too fast and you feel light-headed, get out of the sun. Wear loose fitting clothing, preferably made from lightweight cotton as well as light colors. Drink LOTS of water. Even if you do not feel thirsty, drink anyway. Do not go with the old rule of taking salt tablets. You should always stay clear of these unless you have first consulted with your physician. Stay away from alcohol, soft drinks, caffeine, or heavily sugared drinks to include fruit juice. Take frequent breaks and if necessary, stop for the day. If you do believe you are in trouble, seek medical attention immediately. It is far better safe than sorry!

– **Check your Pulse**

As you exercise, it is to your advantage to keep track of your pulse rate. You can pick up an inexpensive pulse measure at any local Wal-mart, K-Mart, or sporting good store. This will measure your heart rate to ensure you are staying within a healthy range. The rate is measured by counting the beats of your heart in a set amount of time, usually about 15 to 20 seconds, and then multiplying the number of beats to get your number of beats per minute. For example, if your pulse at 20 seconds were 40, since there are 60 seconds in a minute, you would take 40 times three for a total rate per minute of 120.

— Safety First

Whatever you do, if you are involved in a sport or activity that has potential for injury, specifically head injury, use the proper equipment no matter what anyone else tells you. For example, if you are involved with skateboarding and this is how you stay in shape, good for you! However, you need to wear protective gear such as a helmet, gloves, knee guards, etc. Most people think that something significant has to happen in order to get a head injury. Unfortunately, that is a huge misconception. The truth is that falling one foot onto the pavement and hitting your head is enough to cause serious injury or death. This is the time to put your pride aside and think of safety first.

By taking care of your body through good health habits and fitness, you will live a happier, better, and longer life!