

# Your Health

HIT THE GYM EDITION





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# What to Look for in a Gym

**N**ot all gyms are the same. Depending on whether you want a wide array of fitness classes, a variety of different offerings like a swimming pool, a basketball court or child care, or you're looking for a trainer, there's a gym for you, but it might take a little work to find the right gym.

VeryWell Fit offered tips for finding the gym that will help you achieve your fitness goals.

## **LOGISTICS: HOURS, LOCATION AND PARKING**

The best way to ensure you regularly make it to the gym is its convenience. If it's open early enough to go before your office or late enough for a late-night run, you're more likely to go. And look for one close to your home, work or school. No matter how great the facility is, you're way less

likely to drive all the way across town after a long day at the office than to go to a gym half a mile from your home.

While you don't need a front-row parking spot at the gym, it's also good to scope out the parking lot. Visit at the time you plan to work out to ensure you'll have a place to park.

## **COST**

Most gyms require a contract, either annually or on a month-to-month basis, and you pay monthly.

Visit different gyms in your area and find the one you like, then see if they're offering any specials. Many gyms also will negotiate; see if they'll waive an initiation fee, throw in a few sessions with a personal trainer or let you have a month-to-month instead of yearly contract. As with anytime you sign a contract, read it.

## **FEATURES AND ATMOSPHERE**

Figure out your top priorities and make sure your gym offers those. If you want to use treadmills or station-

ary bikes, try out the machines and get comfortable. See how many machines they have; you don't want to wait for half an hour to use the treadmill. Check out the pool and sauna, walk through the kids center and tour the locker rooms. You also want a sense of the gym's atmosphere. Make sure you'll want to work out there—the music isn't too loud, the place is clean, there's enough room for you to work out comfortably, there are ample spray bottles and people are wiping down equipment.



# Taking a Gym Class

**M**any people like to go to fitness classes instead of doing solo workouts; working out in a group can help motivate you to push yourself more than you might have otherwise.

The Huffington Post and LiveStrong discussed the best classes to get you excited about going to the gym and achieving the results you want. With any class, know you can adapt moves to your fitness level.

## ZUMBA AND OTHER DANCE-LIKE CLASSES

These classes are great if you want a high-energy, fun experience that still gets you moving and shaking. Benefits include getting your heart rate up and working different muscle groups without falling into a routine. Other dance classes are Batuka, a mix of aerobics and dance moves set to a Latin beat that offers a full-body workout, and belly dancing, which is doable for all fitness levels and are a good core workout in addition to the cardiovascular work.

## STRENGTH TRAINING

Want a workout that tones every muscle group? Most gyms offer a total body strength training class that hits



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every major muscle group. Depending on the class and instructor, it may be dedicated strength training, including free weights, bars, squats and core exercises. These classes can be good for people who aren't as comfortable with weights, since the instructor can help you with form.

If you want a class that com-

bines weights and cardio, look for a boot camp, which is circuit training that takes its inspiration from military training. You can also look for classes that allow you to spend 30 minutes hitting one muscle group.

## SPIN CLASS

Want a class that'll get your

heart racing but go easy on your joints? Take a spin class, which puts you in a dark room on a stationary bike with loud music and an instructor yelling at you to pedal harder. Spin takes you up steep hills, intense sprints and on long roads. Don't forget your sweat towel and water bottle.

## YOGA AND PILATES

These classes are more focused on stretching, flexibility and specific muscle toning, but don't underestimate how hard they can be physically. These are good classes for people just starting a fitness routine or who need a break from a more demanding regimen.



# Should I Get a Trainer?

People who want to make a big change to their fitness routine should consider getting a personal trainer. You can sign up for a few sessions or opt for a more involved commitment, working out with a trainer a couple of times a week. If you can afford it, spending some time with a trainer may help you achieve your fitness goals more quickly and effectively.

## KICKING UP YOUR INTENSITY

According to WebMD, a trainer can benefit even a seasoned exerciser, introducing you to new exercises or routines, helping you hone your form to make sure you're getting the most from your workout and pushing you past the point when you might normally quit.

## MEETING SPECIFIC GOALS

Whether you want to tone certain muscle groups, improve your posture, flexibility or metabolism or focus on decreasing joint or back pain, a trainer can help you create a routine that helps you accomplish those goals. A trainer can also help ensure you're doing exercises correctly and that you're warming up and cooling down to help you reduce the risk of injury.

## KEEPING YOU CONSISTENT

Getting to the gym regularly can be hard, but if you've already paid for a session with a trainer, you're more likely to get there, according to Ace Fitness. The trainer will hold you accountable, even on days you don't work out with him or her and may ask you about your eating and sleeping habits as well.



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## HELPING WITH INJURIES OR MEDICAL CONDITIONS

If you're coming back from an injury (or just prone to injuries) or have a medical condition that complicates your workout, having a trainer keep an eye on you and help

you design a workout that takes those issues into account can help you be more successful. If you have diabetes, heart disease, arthritis or hypertension, talking to a trainer about ways to help manage those conditions and

ensure your safety.

## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR WORKOUT TIME

Most people can't dedicate two to three hours a day working out, so you want to maximize your time at the gym.

According to LiveStrong, a trainer can help you boost your efficiency, teaching you exercises and routines that increase your metabolism, bump up your calorie burn and help you achieve your goals.



# Easy Ways Trim Down

Summertime means swimsuit season, and no matter your body type or size, you should look forward to some fun in the sun. If you're looking to slim down or bulk up a bit before you hitting the beach, Health.com has suggestions that won't take over your life and will help feel better as well as looking better.

## EAT LOTS OF PRODUCE AND DRINK LOTS OF WATER

The benefit of spring is fresh fruits and vegetables start hitting the store, which makes it easier to load up your plate with salads, berries, carrot sticks and apples slices. Anytime you eat, whether it's a meal or snack, try to make produce at least half of it. Those fiber-filled servings will help fill you up without adding a bunch of calories to your diet.

Now is also a good time to swap out soda, tea and juice for water. Water makes your skin look better and can help reduce the appearance of cellulite. There's not a set amount of you should drink, but aim for several glasses each day. Keeping a water bottle at your desk or in the car will help remind you to drink more. Don't like the taste of water? Add lemon, cucumber slices or berries to your water.

## MAKE WORKOUTS MORE FUN

Find a friend, make a good playlist (or a few of them to mix things up) and look for different types of workouts—go for a walk or hike, go to every fitness class your gym offers or try rock climbing or kickboxing. Also, look for



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ways to add a little extra exercise in your routine. Take the stairs, do planks or bicep curls during commercial breaks or get a standing desk for your office.

You can also focus on spe-

cific muscle groups — putting a big focus on core or arms can help you see results in those areas that will help you feel better in your swimsuit.

Build on your workout time and intensity each week.

Tack on a little extra every week. Five more minutes of working out means another couple of rounds of squats or pushups, another half mile on the treadmill or several more blocks of walking. Also

look for ways to add more intensity to your workout. Time your walks or runs and increase your speed a little each week or increase the amount of weight you're lifting.



# Swimsuit Shopping

One of the best ways to get yourself beach ready is finding the right swimsuit. This will help you not only motivate yourself to get toned, but it can also do some of the work for you in looking sharp and feeling supported. WebMD has ideas to improve your look.

## FIGURE OUT THE RIGHT SUIT FOR YOUR BODY SHAPE

For women who are fuller in the hips and thighs (pear-shaped), avoid boy shorts and find high-cut bottoms, which will make your legs look leaner and longer. Look for a bathing suit top that's V-necked, which will draw attention to your upper body.

If you're apple-shaped (fuller in the stomach), look for a one-piece suit that comes with side detailing or ruching or have a wrap style that give you a slimmer look around the middle. Look for a deep V-neck to draw attention away from your middle.

For women who have an hourglass figure, single-color swimsuits can help you look sleek. Halter maillots or suits with a deep plunge can help women accentuate their body types, and string bikinis also are a good look, particularly for women with curvier hips.

Women with a full body type want to draw the eye up—look for details at the neck like mesh inserts, a V-neck or color blocking. A skirt can provide extra coverage, but keep it fitted. For a two-piece, look for a waistband with folds or ruffles that adjusts higher and helps your stomach look trimmer. Go for cool colors instead of shiny



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fabrics.

Women with a lean or athletic build look best in string bikinis; ruffles and pleating add volume, while a little padding around the top will help round you out.

Full-busted women should

look for a suit with a top that flatters and provides enough support; halter tops can be a good option or find a top with underwire or a hidden bra. Women who have a D cup or larger should avoid high necklines and triangle tops; these

won't provide enough support.

## FOCUS ON GOOD POSTURE

Want to look like you've lost a few pounds? Sit up straight. Slouching makes you look shorter and your stomach look

rounder, but if you keep your back straight and your shoulders back when sitting and distribute your weight evenly between your hips, you'll both look and feel better. Work on this now before swimsuit season.

# Maximize Your Workout

There are lots of exercises you can do either at home or at the gym, with weights or relying on your own body weight, and adjust them to your skill level. If you're not sure about form, get a session or two with a personal trainer to make sure you're doing it right or do these exercises in front of a mirror to check your own form.

Anytime you start a new exercise regime, check with a doctor to ensure you're healthy enough to do so, and listen to your body, stopping or pulling back if you experience pain.

WebMD and Self Magazine offer a number of these exercises.

## SQUATS

Squats are the single best exercise to maximize your workout, tone muscles and burn a lot of calories. This exercise primarily works your glutes and thighs, but you'll also feel them in your calves, hamstrings and abs. You can do these using your body weight or adding free weights or a shoulder bar. Make sure you don't arch your back, and keep your knees from extending beyond your toes.

## PUSHUPS

This exercise, depending on how you do them, can hit biceps, triceps, deltoids, pecs, abs and glutes — all muscles you want to show off in a swimsuit. Keep your back straight and your rear end even with your back and lower yourself until your arms are at a 90-degree angle. To make it less intense, put your knees on the ground.

To add intensity, lift one leg or arm off the ground or put your feet on a bench or exer-



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cise ball.

## DEAD LIFTS

You need weights, either free weights or a bar, for dead lifts. These work out your entire body, especially your legs, back

and rear end. Your form makes a big difference with this one; stand with your legs just wider than your shoulders and keep your knees soft as you lower the weights to the ground, keeping your back straight.

## PLANKS

There's a reason Ruth Bader Ginsburg does this exercise. Get into a pushup position; this can mean elbows or hands on the floor and feet or knees on the floor, placed hip

width apart.

Keep your spine straight and hold this position for a set period of time.

You can make this harder by picking up one appendage at a time.



# Eating to Lose Weight

**L**osing weight and getting fit and toned is a combination of working out and eating better.

Most dietitians will say that reducing the number of calories you eat is the biggest step; while true, it can be tricky to cut back on your calories without feeling hungry much of the time.

Smart eating, however, can help you to feel full and keep you feeling full longer. WebMD has some advice on how to lose a few pounds while still having the energy for your day, including a good workout.

## **EAT THE RIGHT KIND OF PROTEIN**

Protein helps to slow the digestive process, which will help you stay fuller longer and

helps with building muscle and providing long-term energy. Find lean proteins like fish, nuts, avocados and beans and keep red meats to a minimum.

## **EAT LOTS OF PRODUCE**

One good way to get more vegetables into your diet is to eat lots of salad. Replacing a meal with a salad full of good stuff like romaine lettuce, spinach, carrots, celery, tomatoes, cucumbers, grapes, berries, apples and more. But be careful with your add-ons; croutons, bacon bits, cheese, nuts and heavy salad dressing can add more calories to your salad than you realize. Keep these additions light, adding a tablespoon or two of those calorie-heavy items and use vinaigrettes or lighter dressings.

## **EAT FIBER**

Whole grains like oatmeal, whole wheat bread, beans and

brown rice, along with fruits and vegetables, are full of fiber, which help curb your appetite and help prevent constipation and bloating. This helps your stomach look flatter as well, which everyone in a swimsuit wants. Just make sure to include a lot of water in your diet as well.

## **AVOID SALT AND BEER**

Salt causes water retention, which leads to bloating, and that can last for days. The best ways to reduce salt in your diet is to reduce how much processed food you eat. Cook your meals from scratch and look for ways to spice up your food without using as much salt.

As much as summer fun includes drinking, cutting back is a good way to get healthier. One can of beer is about 150 calories, beer and sparkling wines cause bloating and alcohol slows down your body's ability to burn fat.