[IMAGE]

Active Year Round

By Jasper Sidhu, DC

If you're looking to start a consistent exercise program, one that keeps you in shape year after year, you need to understand why people stop exercising - or don't even start in the first place. Consistency is the key, and knowing how to survive the inevitable bumps in the exercise road and keep on going is half the battle.

I want you to think back to the first week of January. I'm sure that like everyone else (including me), you decided to get active this year. We all tend to start out motivated, and yet for one reason or another, at some point during the year, we stop staying active and end up cursing ourselves by year's end.

How do we stick to an exercise program? Not by adopting the latest exercise craze or program promising to magically give you the results you want. And not by beginning a Spartan workout schedule that keeps you in the gym for hours on end every day. It's only by learning fundamental tools that you can start down the path of *consistent* exercise. Once you do that, you will be well-prepared to begin a lifelong journey toward better health. But in order to get there, we first need to figure out why we don't always stay consistent.

Why People Don't Exercise

Before even starting an exercise program, we need to know why people either quit or don't start to exercise in the first place. The top reasons that prevent someone from exercising on a regular basis are a lack of time, inability to exercise due to pain or disability, or not seeing the results they want in the time frame they want. Are you relying on one or more of these reasons to avoid exercising?

image - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark ***"I Don't Have the Time."*** The number-one reason people don't exercise or give up exercising is a perceived lack of time. You work all day and keep telling yourself you can't possibly take 30 minutes to an hour out of your day to exercise. Actually, that's one of the greatest myths out there. You see, when we think of exercise, we tend to think of it as something we need to book into our daily lives, as if it's another appointment in a busy day. However, did you know that doing any activity for 10 minutes, and then doing it three times in a day, is the equivalent of doing the same activity for 30 minutes straight? What this means for you is that if there's an activity, such as walking, that you want to do, but don't have the "time" to get on a treadmill for 30 minutes in a single shot, break it up into three 10

minute time slots throughout the day. Going up and down the stairs at work or taking a few quick walks during lunch and work breaks can be just as effective as a longer workout.

"I'm in Too Much Pain." The second reason people don't exercise or stop exercising is pain or disability. This reason is more common than we think, and it brings us to a major dilemma: Although exercise can cause a certain amount of discomfort (*Note:* It should *not* particularly cause pain), it is also probably one of the best ways to help you with your problem. Talk to your doctor about the right way to exercise, because there is definitely a right way (even if you have a disability or other limitation) and a wrong way (which can cause pain and even injury). Getting some education at the start will go a long way in making you feel comfortable about what you are doing. If you exercise in a safe and comfortable way, it will always benefit you, regardless of your pain or disability.

"It's Not Working." The third reason people don't follow through with an exercise program is that they don't see the results they want in the time frame they want. Before beginning any exercise program, it's important to ask yourself what you want to achieve. The reason is simple: All exercise programs are not created equal. Exercising to lose weight is different than exercising to build muscle mass, which is different than exercising to maintain optimal health. Once you know what you want to achieve, you need to be realistic about the type of program you need to get those results.

It's also important to understand that if you do the same exercise routine or activity over and over, your body gets "used" to it. When that happens, we tend to stop making any gains. Do you know what elite athletes and other successful exercisers do? They constantly change up their programs. You can either change up your activities periodically or vary their intensity. For example, if you enjoy walking as your predominant form of exercise, walk faster than usual for two weeks, and then walk at a different pace and distance for a few weeks. It's that simple! This also prevents you from getting bored with doing the same routine all the time. Make it challenging and you will see results, and you'll be more likely to stick with it over the long term.

How to Stick With an Exercise Routine

Break up your workout. As mentioned, you don't need to exercise in a single block of time to see results. Simply take the stairs at work, park farther away from wherever you happen to be going (work, school, the grocery store, etc.), or walk over to a colleague's desk rather than phoning them, etc. Did you know you can potentially burn just as many calories throughout the day doing this as you would from huffing and puffing

at the gym for hours? Make exercise a part of your daily life and you won't even know you are exercising!

Start small. Most people tend to overdo it when they first start an exercise program. We get so motivated that we start going to the gym every day. We try to do more than we can. Guess what happens? We get so sore or so burned out that we actually start hating it. Start off slow and pace yourself. This will always keep you going over the long haul.

Remember, you don't need to spend hours at the gym. Nowadays, even if you do decide to go to a gym, you can do a weight-training program in 20 minutes. If you don't know how, ask a trainer. More is not necessarily better. It's about efficiency and quality of exercise, not quantity. In fact, there are high-intensity cardio workouts that last only four minutes, if you can believe that, and they are used by professional athletes and other people who are exceptionally well-conditioned. If elite athletes are doing things in less time and seeing results, so can you. Always do full-body workouts, making sure you engage all your muscles. This always leads to better results. If you want to accomplish this within 15 minutes, vibration exercise can also be an option [see the January 2009 issue], particularly if are unable to perform conventional exercises due to injury or physical limitation.

- Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark ***Try new activities.*** The best way to prevent exercise boredom is to always seek new activities you can do during the year. Some activities that can give you a great workout just as well as conventional exercise include salsa or ballroom dancing, golf, swimming, or even an activity such as sightseeing around town. If you are going out for dinner, park as far away from the restaurant as possible and enjoy the walk there and back. These simple activities add up.

Write down your goals. Did you know one of the best predictors of success is writing things down? It's as simple as spending a minute at the start of each day writing down what you are going to do that day. This type of activity provides reinforcement that you have goals to achieve. Always follow the SMART rules of goal setting. This means each goal should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely.

No matter what your fitness level, time availability or motivation, taking simple steps to staying active is within your reach. Not only will you be able to do more, but you'll also have better overall health and a better ability to combat the stresses of everyday life. All it requires is a bit of your time in outlining your goals and what you will do to achieve them. Once you do, write down what you're going to do every day - and then do it! Only by committing to exercise on a consistent basis can you hope to follow through on a consistent basis.

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