

[IMAGE]

## 4 Ways to Shape Up for Spring

By Editorial Staff

Have you been effectively (or not so effectively, if you think about it) hibernating this year? What we mean is, have you taken a hiatus from your exercise routine – even though it was working and you were feeling great? Trust us, you’re not alone. For various reasons, many of us struggle with consistency, and that starts with our commitment to working out regularly. Unfortunately, once we set the wheels of inactivity in motion, it can be tricky to turn things around.

Let’s change all that starting today. After all, spring is just around the corner, bringing with it warmer, longer days, more sunshine, and with all that, a spirit of renewal and growth that can translate directly into your life. Here’s how:

*1. Make Movement a Daily Priority:* Committing to exercise starts with a simple step: taking one. It’s said movement is life, so start living by making daily activity a part of yours. Find creative ways to take more steps and move more body parts, whether at home or at work. One of the best (and easiest) ways is to set your phone / watch to alert you periodically (every 45 minutes or so) to get up from your desk / chair and walk around for five minutes or so. Another great tip: Take a short walk after dinner every evening. It will assist in digestion and burn calories at the same time.

*2. Early to Bed, Early to Rise:* Sleep (or lack thereof) is increasingly implicated in health issues, with some even attributing chronic sleep dysfunction to just about every disease imaginable. Poor sleep also can sabotage your workouts, making you lethargic and all-too-unwilling to find your way to the gym.

exercise - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Sleep needs to be consistent, restful and restorative; set the stage for proper sleep by regulating your sleep-wake cycle; avoiding foods and activities that could disrupt your sleep (drinking too much at night is one of the most common); and overall, making sleep a priority – something a surprisingly small percentage of people does.

*3. Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff:* As research suggests in another article in this issue of *To Your Health*, chronic stress can actually contribute to weight gain / obesity. Stress can be oppressive if you let it, but you can manage your stress by dealing with stressful events before they come up. That can start with better

organization (e.g., a To-Do List that helps with smooth completion of your daily tasks) and what we call "better stress processing": reducing the importance of stressful events so you have the power, not the stress.

*4. Set a Goal – and Then Another One:* Motivation is the key to consistent, lifelong fitness and health. Stay focused by setting a small, measurable, achievable goal - for example, jogging 1 mile, twice a week, for the next month. When you've met the goal, set another one: a longer distance, more frequent runs, or another activity you can add to your jogging regimen (e.g., two days a week at the gym).

If your winter hasn't been what you'd hoped in terms of physical activity, don't fret: skies are clearing and brighter, warmer days are on the horizon. It's time to shape up for spring (and every season after that); work with your doctor to help design an exercise program suitable to your goals and health needs.

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