

[IMAGE]

Get in Shape for Summer, Starting Now: 5 Easy Steps

By Editorial Staff

Summer may seem like months away, but if you consider the shape the holiday season has likely left you in, it's right around the corner and you've got *a lot* of work to do. Why not get started today? Before you know it, you'll have the summer beach / river / lake body you always dreamed of having – or used to have but have neglected of late. Here are a few tips that are sure to pay off by the time summer rolls around:

Step 1. Pantry overhaul: Let's start with your pantry, which could be overflowing with just the non-nutrition your body doesn't need to get toned and tightened. Phase out the refined, processed, sugary crackers, cookies and cupcakes with higher-quality foods like nuts, seeds and whole grains. And while you're at it, move on to the fridge and make sure you're keeping sodas, energy drinks and empty-calorie foods to a minimum, and colorful foods – particularly fresh fruits and vegetables – at a maximum.

Step 2. Eating is fundamental: Now that you're learning what foods to eat – and what foods to avoid – you're ready for lesson #2: eat more to gain more. No, we're not talking about gaining weight; we're talking about increasing your metabolism, which will allow your body to burn calories / fat, even when you're inactive. Small, balanced, nutritious meals are the key to getting in shape. In fact, studies suggest that people who consume more calories more frequently, but of the healthier variety, are less likely to be overweight than people who eat only a few times a day (and fewer calories), but of the non-nutritive variety.

Beach Body - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *Step 3. You move, you lose:* Exercise is a real key to weight loss and certainly to developing a lean, toned body for the summer – and all year round. So get moving every day, and in every way possible. Don't let work, weather or life stop you, even when it's easy to give in. Every day doesn't have to be a trip to the gym or a multi-layered workout; sometimes a brisk walk or a simple body-weight routine (see below) can be just as effective.

Step 4. Your body is your friend: Body-weight exercises are a simple, fun way to get in shape. You don't need a gym membership, a rack of weights or other exercise equipment, and you can do them right at home, come rain or shine. We're talking push-ups, core exercises like sit-ups, crunches, etc., triceps pushdowns using a chair; there are countless exercises you can do without using anything but your body weight. Tone,

tighten and firm your physique, and watch the pounds disappear.

Step 5. Shake it off: You've adopted steps 1-4 above and are starting to feel pretty good about yourself – and then things start to turn sour. You feel tired, you're bored of the same old routines, and this fitness thing doesn't have the appeal it did a few months ago. What can you do? Follow step #5, which is to shake off the summer shape-up blues by making sure you *relax*. Relaxation can take two forms: taking a 2-3 day break from your routine so your body and mind can rest and rejuvenate; and making sure you keep your daily stress low by taking a little time for yourself, in the form of a long bath / shower, a quiet night without TV, a good book before bed, etc. All of the above and more will help you maintain focus and also inhibit the buildup of cortisol, a hormone linked to stress +and weight gain.

Page printed from:

http://www.toyourhealth.com/mpacms/tyh/article.php?id=1706&no_paginate=true&no_b=true