

[IMAGE]

How to Avoid Fitness Failures

By Editorial Staff

We're two weeks into a new year and fitness centers from coast to coast are packed with returning and first-time fitness enthusiasts. But whether new to the gym environment or a regular attendee, you won't succeed in the long term if you don't follow certain time-tested principles. Check out these three common fitness failures and how you can avoid them :

1. Poor Form: Injury risk is high when you don't use proper form, whether running on a treadmill or lifting weights. For example, running with your head down, your legs stiff and/or your back rounded increases your risk of injury, particularly if you maintain any of those faulty positions over time. And when doing biceps (arm) curls with free weights, resistance bands or a resistance machine, if you're swinging your arms, instead of bending at the elbow slowly and deliberately, you could injure the back, shoulder or elbow. What's more, it won't isolate the biceps adequately to work the muscle.

2. Poor Timing: Improper time management is one of the top reasons people skip workouts, and it can become chronic. Telling yourself, *I'll get to the gym a few times this week*, is nice, but it's not specific enough to ensure compliance. Pick a precise date and time for each workout, schedule it on your calendar, and stick to it. And when you're at the gym, stay on point as well. Come in with a game plan of what exercises you'll be doing, how long you'll be doing cardio, etc., and try not to deviate, particularly if you're tired. Make your time count and reap the benefits over time.

3. Poor Attitude: Yes, it takes the right attitude to survive in the fitness game, starting with an appreciation that lifelong fitness comes from consistent, small steps. If you're looking to hit the gym for a few weeks at a time and then take a month off, you'll likely be disappointed by your results. The right attitude also means not being afraid to mix things up; sticking to your "same old, same old" fitness routine will eventually lead to muscle stagnation and burnout. Keep trying new exercises to keep your brain and body engaged.

4. Poor Nutrition: No fitness conversation would be complete without mention of nutrition. Pure and simple, if you're not fueling your body with the right foods, you'll be limited in your ability to complete your workout, much less recover from it in time for the next one. Two sound components: complex

carbohydrates before a workout to give you energy, and lean protein afterward to begin the muscle repair / recovery process. But it's not black and white, of course; just avoid energy-draining foods (fast food, sugar, etc.), and eat a balanced diet high in whole grains, quality proteins, vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds, and you'll be on your way.

There you have it: four common fitness failures and what you can do to avoid them. Talk to your doctor before beginning any fitness program, particularly if you have a health condition that may require modification of certain exercises and/or avoidance of others.

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