

[IMAGE]

## Stick With the Plan

By Editorial Staff

Research suggests that as many as 70% of people who establish a fitness resolution fail before achieving their goal. One possible reason: They don't understand that they need to *stick with the plan*. In fact, a new study makes it clear that establishing a gym habit isn't as easy as going a few times – it can take real dedication.

In the study, researchers tracked 30,000 people who worked out at a popular national fitness chain to determine how often they showed up (checked in) over a four-year period. Based on this data, they created a "habit formation curve" for each gym attendee to determine how long it took their behavior (in this case, going to the gym) to become highly predictable. In general, habit formation related to gym attendance took approximately six months.

Stick With the Plan - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark By the way, the same study used a similar methodology to predict habit formation for another activity: hand washing among hospital staff. Results showed it took only three months to form that habit (which still seems too long, all things considered) – but still much shorter than forming the habit to visit the gym. The point: *Habits take time to cultivate*; and some take longer than others. Going to the gym consistently doesn't come naturally to many people (particularly the ones who need it most), which accounts for the high drop-out rates among people who resolve to achieve a fitness goal (at the gym or any other setting).

Anything worth achieving is worth fighting for; and when it comes to fitness / weight loss / better health, it's often the biggest challenge – but the most rewarding when you succeed. If you've only been going to the gym for a few weeks or months, need to restart your gym regimen, or are afraid to start altogether, win half the battle by taking heed of these findings and recognizing that you need to *stick with the plan*.

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