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7 MISTAKES PEOPLE MAKE WHEN STARTING EXERCISE

Starting an exercise programme can be a daunting thing, and most people give up in the first few weeks. In this article I'll talk about the common mistakes that people make, and give you tips on how you can avoid them to ensure you make progress towards your goals, stay injury-free and keep motivated.

Thinking you can do it alone

Being unsure of what to do is one of the biggest mistakes we see. If you're uncertain about what you're doing, it's likely that it will lead to injury as a result of poor technique.

TIP: Hire a personal trainer or find a motivated exercise partner with some experience of training to help you.

Under-appreciating how hard it can be at the start

Starting an exercise programme can be very rewarding, but invariably the first few sessions are tough, no matter how fit you used to be.

TIP: Mentally prepare yourself. A great way to do this is to make a list of all the reasons you're starting exercise, and pin them up on the wall somewhere as a constant reminder. Perhaps include a photo of a fitter or slimmer you if that's your goal.

Ignoring nutrition

Exercise is just one part of the equation when it comes to health and fitness. Optimising your nutrition will pay huge dividends when it comes to weight management, injury prevention and general good health.

TIP: Keep a food diary. You will be surprised by some aspects of it, and it's a good first step towards introducing changes.

Overdoing it

It's laudable when someone makes the decision to start exercising, but pacing and gradual progression is vital to success. All too often we hear about people who've gone too hard too soon and are either injured or completely put off.

TIP: Start slowly and build up from there. Work with a trainer who can plan your training for you, or if you're going it alone, try and end each session thinking you could have done more and work upwards from there.

Neglecting to stretch

Stretching is crucial after every workout. Most of us have desk jobs, which encourages poor posture, so our muscles are short and tight. Exercise can have the same effect, so stretching afterwards is very important.

TIP: Schedule in 5-10 minutes of each day to gently stretch, as well as post-workout. Consider doing some yoga at least once a week for longer, deeper, supervised stretches.

Ignoring the bigger picture

I mentioned earlier that exercise was only one part of the equation. Sleep, a balanced lifestyle, low stress, good hydration, meditation and time to yourself are all equally important for good health.

TIP: Take some time to think about how those things balance up in your life, and identify where you could make changes. Start small.

Obsessing with the Garmin and other gadgets

Personalised fitness gadgets like Fit Bit, Garmin and the Nike bands are great if they encourage you to take an interest in your fitness, but sometimes they can distract from the pure pleasure of exercising.

TIP: If you use gadgets and monitoring devices, try not to look at them when exercising unless you have a good reason to. Download the data and examine it afterwards but don't let it distract you from the session itself.

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