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Evaluate your workout and overcome common exercise pitfalls

With a desire for instant gratification, Americans tend to fall prey to false promises of overnight success or quick fix solutions when it comes to weight loss and getting in shape. Sound exercise training strategies



GET THE EDGE
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are required to get positive physical results. The first step in achieving your fitness goals is making a commitment to yourself. Once you develop a clear vision of how you want to look and feel, it is important to get

a baseline physical or evaluation from your physician.

The next step is determining where and when to workout, followed by choosing the right exercises for your goals and how often to do them.

Then I recommend consulting a fitness professional. You may think you don't need a trainer because you have been an athlete all your life or because you read all the fitness magazines. But how many of you get injured playing golf or tennis, or wake up with a sore back each morning?

Hiring a qualified trainer will eliminate the guesswork, prevent injuries and dramatically speed up your results. In addition, the support and accountability are critical for long-term success.

But even if you don't meet with a trainer,

there are several common pitfalls to avoid:

- Using improper form. This is worse than doing no exercise at all. Poor technique leads to compensatory motion and altered muscle recruitment, not to mention possible injury.

- Lifting too much weight. This results in bad form, inefficient muscle activation and eventually an injury. Always begin with a lighter weight and master technique before advancing the resistance.

- Improper exercise order. For maximum results, it is best to work the larger muscle groups (chest, back, and legs) prior to working the smaller muscle groups (biceps, shoulders and triceps).

- Inadequate exercise intensity. Aside from poor nutrition, people who fail to lose weight typically struggle because they do

not work out intensely enough. It takes hard work to get into shape.

- Lack of proper recovery. Some people become obsessed and end up overtraining without giving their bodies time to recover. Signs of overtraining include fatigue and persistent muscle soreness.

- Focusing on cardiovascular training for weight loss. This is a big issue with many women who believe strength training leads to bulkiness and that's false. It helps prevent osteoporosis and build lean muscle, which in turn speeds up metabolism and burns calories. An increase in lean muscle leads to a decrease in fat mass.

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