



My Trainer

So you're thinking about working out with a personal trainer but you're not sure if it's right for you? You don't have to be training for the Olympics or a professional athlete to benefit from a personal trainer; in fact, the "average Joe" would probably benefit the most from personal training.

Personal trainers are used by people of all fitness levels, age groups and economic level. The personalized workout program and individual attention of personal training is one of the best ways to improve your health and fitness and reach the goals you've set. Still wondering if personal training is right for you, consider what the people at the International Dance and Exercise Association (IDEA) suggest that a personal trainer can do for you:

Improve your overall fitness. Surveys show the primary reason people hire personal trainers is to get professional assistance to improve cardiovascular health, strength, flexibility, endurance, posture, balance and coordination. A trainer will monitor your progress and fine-tune your program as you go, helping you work your way off plateaus.

Reach or maintain a healthy weight. Body fat reduction, weight reduction or management, body shaping and toning can all be achieved with the aid of a qualified trainer, who can help you set realistic goals and determine safe strategies, all while providing the encouragement you need.

Learn to stick to it. Sticking with well-intentioned plans is one of the biggest challenges exercisers face. Qualified personal trainers can provide motivation for developing a lifestyle that places a high priority on health and activity. A trainer can help you brainstorm ways to overcome your biggest obstacles to exercise.

Focus on your unique health concerns. Surveys show that 50 percent of fitness clients have special medical needs, such as arthritis, diabetes or obesity. A personal trainer can help you with these or other issues, including low-back pain, rehabilitation from injury and pre/postnatal training. Your trainer can work

with your physician, physical therapist or other health care provider to plan a safe, efficient program that will speed your recovery or enable you to reach your health goals.

Find the right way to work out. You will learn the correct way to use equipment, and appropriate form and technique for cardiovascular work and free-weight training.

Stop wasting time. Get maximum results in minimum time with a program designed specifically for you. Workouts that use your strengths and improve on your weaknesses are efficient and effective.

Learn new skills. Want to improve your tennis game, learn to ski, become an in-line skater, golf like a pro, better your weekend basketball game or get ready for a wilderness adventure vacation? An individualized program can improve your overall conditioning and develop the specific skills you need.

Enhance your mind, body and spirit. A personal trainer can act as a doorway to new personal growth experiences. Many trainers

provide mind-body activities, such as yoga or tai chi sessions. Your trainer may help you uncover new insights about yourself or find potential you didn't realize you had.

Benefit from the buddy system. What could be better than making a commitment to regularly meet with someone who will provide you with individualized attention and support?

Take charge of your Program, and do it your way. With the right trainer, you can find the exercise program that works best for you. Are you more comfortable with a demanding program or a gentler approach? Would you like to train at home or at work, at a club or in a trainer's facility? How many times per week or month do you want to meet your trainer, and for how long? Carefully choosing a personal trainer enables you to select the type of guidance that will benefit you. You can get fit and healthy your way and take ultimate responsibility for your own health.

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Start smart and stay strong as you stride inside.

Starting Up

Place your feet on the base of the treadmill, just wide of the belt, and set the incline at 1, which, on a treadmill, is equal to level ground, says Corey. (The 0 setting is actually a slight decline.) Program the belt to move at a slow walking speed—say, 3 miles per hour. Judge how fast the belt is moving, then step on, gradually increasing your speed.

The Sweet Spot

"A good guide to where you should be on the treadmill is where the side handles start to turn down toward the ground," says Corey. If you're behind the handles, you're too far back and risk falling off the end of the machine. If you're too far forward, your feet may hit the plastic at the front of the belt—and send you tumbling off the back. Not safe—or cool. No side rails? Stay as centered as possible, and look straight ahead to stay balanced. "Your body will follow your eyes," says Corey. "If you're looking at your feet, you're going to start to sway. Pick a spot on the wall and stay focused."

If you do lose your balance, hit the emergency stop button ASAP.

"Running with poor form will cause you to run out of energy faster, because you're not being efficient."

It's All About Form

Bad form isn't just about looking goofy—it's about safety and performance, too. "Running with poor form will cause you to run out of energy faster, because you're not being efficient," says Corey. Plus, it puts added stress on joints and could predispose you to injury. If your treadmill is positioned in front of a mirror, check yourself out every once in a while. Here's what to look for:

Upper body

Run "tall" with your back comfortably straight. Slouching places undue stress on your joints and shortens your stride, making you take more steps to cover the same distance, which uses more energy and slows you down. Take a deep breath, and your back will naturally start to straighten. Also: Don't let your shoulders creep toward your ears. Look straight ahead, and keep your chin level, not tucked into your neck or pointed toward the ceiling.

Arms

Bend your elbows at 90-degree angles, and keep your hands in unclenched fists. Swing your arms forward and back, not across your body, which subtracts from your body's forward motion. The more you move your arms, the faster your feet will carry you forward.

Feet

With each step, land between your heel and midfoot, and quickly roll forward and off the ball of your foot. This will prevent you from slapping the belt with flat feet, which jars your knees, hips, and back, and could lead to injury.

Source: U24. Used with permission



The chocolate and its properties - By Sofia Abdelkafi Dt.p at Mansfield Athletic Club

Antidepressant? Admittedly, cocoa contains antidepressant compounds and theobromine (a substance that acts as a stimulant). However, one would need to consume excessive quantities – in the neighbourhood of 100 kilos of chocolate – on a daily basis to notice any real effect. Obviously not recommended...

Aphrodisiac? No scientific study has confirmed such a fact. The true aphrodisiac parameters to measure would be the pleasure of eating chocolate, the environment created around such indulgence, and the energy it procures as a result. What's more, there is as much caffeine in 85g of dark chocolate as there is in a single cup of coffee.

Antioxidants: The polyphenol contained in cocoa beans, called flavinoid, has antioxidant properties (protective effects on a person's general health).

Dark chocolate containing at least 35% cocoa

is understandably richer in antioxidants than milk chocolate or white chocolate. However, to this day, no one has been able to confirm the quantity of polyphenols that must be consumed on a daily basis to obtain the protective effects required for heart health.

Chocolate certainly should not be treated as a drug! If you devour chocolate all day long, the negative effects due to sugar and fat content will cancel out the above-mentioned positive attributes.

It would seem that the antioxidant effectiveness would be best achieved by consuming chocolate on a regular basis, but in moderation (+/-2 squares per day).

Dark chocolate (also known as bittersweet): At least 35% cocoa solids and 5% milk solids. Note that quality chocolate contains between 60 and 70 % cocoa. The more cocoa the chocolate contains, the better its quality.

Milk chocolate: (contains more sugar than dark chocolate): minimum 25% cocoa solids and 12% milk solids.

White chocolate: At least 20% cocoa butter and 14% milk solids.

Sweetened chocolate (with aspartame or other sweetening agents): At least 30% cocoa solids and up to 12% milk solids. Note that just because chocolate is sugar-free does not mean it is fat-free!

Legislation: A chocolate item that contains vegetable fat other than cocoa butter is not allowed to display the name "chocolate." It should display a term such as "chocolatey treat" for instance. What's also interesting to realize is that these treats often contain trans fat, which is harmful to cardiac health.

Your three-step triathlon plan

Despite its reputation as the supreme test of fitness, a triathlon isn't as daunting as it seems. The growth of sprint triathlons (½-mile swim, 12.4-mile bike, 3.1-mile run) has helped expand the sport from Ironman to Everyman levels. If you're reasonably fit and have dabbled in all three sports, you can finish with energy to spare. Don't believe us? Then believe Scott Fliegelman, a USA Triathlon Level 1 coach and director of Fast Forward Sports. He's guided hundreds of newbies through their first race. Here are his secrets for your first tri.

The Water

Challenge

There's no lane-line on the bottom of a lake (or ocean).

Strategy

Practice swimming straight in open water at least a few times before race day. Otherwise, swim indoors in your wetsuit and learn to breath on both sides of your body. (Race buoys may be to the right or left.) Also, practice glancing forward without picking up your head, which drives your legs deeper and scrubs off speed. To simulate the mayhem of the start, recruit a few buddies to swim alongside in your lane.



On Race Day

Get in the water 15 to 20 minutes beforehand. Acclimating to the temperature and the excitement will decrease the likelihood of hyperventilation.

Transition 1

To avoid calf or hamstring cramps, walk, jog,

and then run up the beach. Likewise, take it easy removing your wetsuit; you're just one awkwardly pointed toe away from a calf cramp.

Bodyglide is an inexpensive, indispensable lube that will help the wetsuit come off quickly without abrasion or profanity (Bodyglide.com).



The Road

Challenge

Since drafting is illegal, your bike and riding position must be as efficient as possible.

Strategy

Even though lots of people ride mountain bikes in triathlons, they're a poor choice. They're heavy, the wide tires raise rolling resistance, and the upright riding position increases wind resistance. Road bikes are best. Their aerodynamics offer free speed. If you're buying a road bike, make sure it's professionally fitted to your proportions. If you already own a road bike or are borrowing one, have it tuned-up and fitted as well.

On Race Day

"Consume about 16 to 20 ounces of a sports drink a half-hour before the swim," says Fliegelman. "People sweat more than they think while swimming. If you're not hydrated before the race, you might be dehydrated when you get in the saddle."

Transition 2

The bike-to-run transition is notorious for giving newcomers fits—and cramps. "Almost

every time you ride in training, do an easy 10- to 15-minute run right afterward, to get that neuromuscular connection adapted," says Fliegelman.

The Last Leg

Challenge

Refueling during the run is a tricky proposition. If you try to blow through aid stations, you might just blow up.

Strategy

Take the run/walk approach: Run between aid stations and walk through them. You'll catch your breath and be able to refuel efficiently for the final push. "Even in a shorter triathlon, someone running 9 minutes and walking 1 minute will probably outrun the person who runs a 9-, 12-, or 11-minute mile," says Fliegelman.

On Race Day

Friends may want to cheer you on at the finish line, but you'll get more of a mental boost if they are strung out along the race route. Putting your name on your shirt or hat also allows the crowd to personalize their support for you. So, for at least 1 day, you can feel like Lance Armstrong.

Race Recovery

Eat something! You need food and fluids to hydrate and recover. Carbohydrates and potassium-rich foods (like bananas) will go a long way to keep cramps at bay and make you feel human again.

Source: U24. Used with permission.



Dance off you excess pounds

Ever thought of dancing as a good way to lose or keep off weight? Well it is, and Michele Chovan-Taylor, Divisional Group X Manager for 24 Hour Fitness, says it's not hard to see why. "It's fun. There is a disassociation as to how hard you are working. You are so engrossed in learning the steps and listening to music that it doesn't even feel like work."



Dance movements are fun, but they can really give you a workout. "The movements that shape the body and burn the most calories are the ones we try to incorporate in group X classes... like the mambo cha-cha or pivots," says Chovan-Taylor. "People like to turn, they love when we have them twirling and turning or jumping and leaping. The movements where you leave or cover the floor burn the most calories."

Chovan-Taylor says the people who really enjoy Group X dance classes tend to be outgoing,

have a dance background or have taken dance at some point in their lives. It doesn't matter what age they are. "We have an easier salsa class that appeals to the senior population and hip-hop classes which are enjoyed by people in their teens to those in their 40's or older."

how to get the most out of any dance class

In order to lose or maintain weight, Chovan-Taylor recommends exercising a minimum of three times per week. "But I think five times per week is best. Personally, I work out Monday through Friday and take the weekend off." But she advises against taking the same dance class more than two times per week. "If you do the same exercise constantly then the body starts to plateau. That's also when you start to get bored and drop out."

Even if you don't fully know the routines at first, you can still get aerobic exercise. "We teach it so everyone can get a workout. You learn the routine in layers. For example, at first you do only lower body movements, then just upper body, or we do it in half-time and use lots of repetition before putting it all together and picking up the pace."

Still, some classes have fairly advanced choreography. "Former dancers will pick up things very quickly. For the general population, if they come back four to five times they'll start to get it. I always tell new people that if they've been in the class two to three times and they feel like a dork, then they are doing it right." The main thing, she says, is that people continue to move. "If you go home and practice the steps, you'll pick it up even sooner."

what class is right for you?

The dance class that's right for you probably depends on the kind of music that you like. If you like hip-hop there are several options. Super Street is the most challenging hip-hop class. It is divided into a 30-minute class, "The Grooves," which covers basic, authentic hip-hop style movements with easier choreography. It is followed by "The Moves," another 30-minute class with more intricate steps. The Grooves and Moves classes together constitute the Super Street class. In the Super Street class, people perform for each other at the end, putting Moves and Grooves together.

Chovan-Taylor says that beginning and advanced Salsa classes are also extremely popular. They are salsa fitness classes for

individuals, but many of the same moves can be used in Latin partner dancing.

Another unique dance class is Aqua Ballet. Chovan-Taylor says this class, although it's not done on the dance floor, uses basic ballet bar movements. It is perfect for seniors, overweight people, pregnant women and those with arthritis or injuries. "It's not the kind of class where you work up a sweat, because obviously you're in the water; but I've taken it and my legs and glutes were sore... and my heart rate was definitely up!"

Dance classes have been so well-received that 24 Hour Fitness is developing a ballet class as well. "Dancing can keep your weight down, but it's not just about how you look any more. It's how you feel and the quality of your life," Chovan-Taylor says.

Divisional Group X Manager Michele Chovan-Taylor has danced in many Las Vegas shows and studied at the Joffrey ballet. She started teaching fitness classes when, as a dancer, she was told to trim her weight and has taught dance ever since.

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Ask the Expert

Q: I regularly have tension or pain in the back neck. What would suggest would be appropriate to relief the tension? Acupuncture? Massage therapy?

Jean-Jacques

A: Most tension and pain associated with the spine is a result of postural and mechanical loading. Essentially, any therapy should focus on assessing the reason for the pain and then addressing the causes / symptoms. What I would recommend to you is to try a mechanical treatment series that will allow you to rid yourself of this problem for good. Addressing movement, muscle balance, posture and tension is a long-term solution to these types of pain. I would be happy to have a look at your neck and back at your convenience. Please call the clinic to speak with me if you have any further questions or to book an appointment.

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