

Top 10 Fitness Tips

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Almost everyone at some point in their life has decided that they should turn over a new leaf, get in shape and go to the gym. By the same token most of us have either just exercised the way we feel is best, or the way a friend or someone down the gym has told us is best. Unfortunately these methods are usually not the best or just not suited towards the goals we have set and what we are training for.

I include myself in the above statement, but I have spent a lot of time and money trying all methods of training to find out what is truly the best way to train. I have played and competed in most sports, joined various gyms, worked in gyms ranging from your local health club to teaching Martial Arts. I have also been to University and attended many courses, achieving various qualifications in the field of Sport, Fitness and Nutrition.

After all this I decided that I wanted to make a passion a career and I am now working in Professional Sport, as well as owning my own business providing fitness classes and personal training. Here are my top ten fitness tips to get you on track to a fitter, healthier new you.

FITNESS TIP 1 – Fitness Testing

First of all try and design a few simple easy fitness tests to give you some quantifiable data that you can compare against once you have been following a certain fitness program for around 6-8 weeks, and then keep testing at regular intervals. The tests must be designed to test what you want to improve and be as specific to your sport/activity as possible. For example if you want to improve speed then make sure you have a test for speed.

If your goal is to lose weight then you can weigh yourself, however I will be coming back to this later in the article. Make sure you weigh yourself with the same scales at the same time of the day in the same place to ensure accuracy of results.

There is no limit to how many different tests you can do and you can even design your own. All you must do is make sure that every time you test, it is exactly the same procedure as when you tested before.

Here is an example of tests:

1 Rep Max – upper body strength test

30 Metre Sprint – running speed and acceleration test

Standing Long Jump – leg power

The internet can provide you with all manner of tests and procedures to follow if you are unsure how to test a certain ability. If not try and ask a fitness professional or design your own, but make sure you set strict parameters and FOLLOW THEM!

FITNESS TIP 2 – Don't Obsess Over Weight

Your weight is just a number and can be very misleading when it comes to determining the effectiveness of your training program and I will explain why. Muscle, fat and water all weigh different amounts. I have had many people say to me that they have been training really hard but haven't seen a dramatic loss in weight, but have seen a loss in inches around their waist, thighs and

so on. The reason for this is that muscle weighs heavier than fat. So what's been happening is that they have decreased the amount of fat in their body and increased their lean muscle mass.

Now before all you women start saying I don't want to be big and have muscles you won't. The only way you will look like that is if you start eating like a bodybuilder and increase your calorie intake significantly!

So basically my tip is to listen to people around you who compliment you and how you look and to take note of the way your clothes are now fitting. Alternatively you can get your Body Fat and Lean Muscle Mass Percentage worked out. There are various methods of doing this but the equipment used to get an accurate answer is expensive. So the best option is to find a professional with the equipment who will charge a nominal fee to assess you.

FITNESS TIP 3 – Avoid Faddy Diets

Many of the diets you read are either unhealthy or just too hard to follow. The main problem with diets is that you are effectively starving yourself. When you do this your body will first use all your carbohydrate stores from the muscles and liver as a source of energy. Once all carbohydrate stores have been used the next source of fuel will be protein, again from the muscles. The loss of protein due to its usage as an energy source will mean you lose lean muscle mass. This is counter effective if your aim is to lose weight because the amount of lean muscle mass you have is directly linked to your metabolism. In other words the more lean muscle tissue you have the faster your metabolism (the rate at which you burn calories). Fat will remain in your body and be more or less the same amount as was present before the diet. Going back to **FITNESS TIP 2**, don't be fooled by weight because you may have just lost lean muscle mass and slowed down your metabolism. To make it worse when you stop dieting you return to old eating habits with a slower metabolism which makes it harder to burn calories and therefore you may end up putting extra weight on.

FITNESS TIP 4 – Functional Training

Our bodies were designed to move and work in 3 anatomical planes of motion. Therefore when we exercise we should mimic our everyday movements, or the movements we make in a sporting situation to guarantee the best results. Avoid using resistance machines in the gym because you are typically limiting yourself to exercising in only 1 plane of motion at a time, and therefore not exercising in a functional way. Another problem is you limit yourself to a single muscle group at a time. It will take you a long time to train the whole body! The best equipment is often the cheapest and simplest design. Try and pick equipment that allows you to train in all 3 planes at the same time and works on core muscles. Equipment that I would recommend you use are TRX Suspension Trainer, Medicine Balls, Kettlebells, Resistance Bands and Stability Balls.

FITNESS TIP 5 – Integrated Training

Integrated training is basically a method of combining multiple components of fitness into one training program. For example, rather than working on flexibility for 10 minutes and then moving on to a drills that focus on aerobic capacity, power, core stability all separately, why not design a drill or exercise that incorporates all components. Not only will you save time but your performance will improve at a faster rate. This has been scientifically proven by the National Academy Of Sports Medicine (NASM).

The best part about integrated training is that you don't need fancy expensive equipment and if your imagination is good enough no equipment at all! If you are to use equipment I would again recommend TRX, Medicine Balls, Kettlebells and Resistance Bands.

FITNESS TIP 6 – Train Using The HIIT Method

HIIT stands for High Intensity Interval Training. There is no such thing as training long and hard. You will not be able to train for 2 hours using this method. A HIIT session typically lasts under half an hour. HIIT will burn fat 9 times more effectively than long duration moderate intensity exercise. HIIT will also improve performance and produces the quickest and most dramatic changes to your body and cardiovascular system.

FITNESS TIP 7 – Recuperation

Rest and recuperation is important in order to get the best results from your training. Although most of you will not need too much persuasion to take rest, there are times when our bodies don't get enough rest even when we think we are ok. It is especially important to those of you that take part in a lot of high intensity exercise. A minimum of 1 days rest is needed per week and in some cases more depending on how much and how long you have been participating in high intensity competition or training. During rest your body will be able to replenish glycogen stores (needed for energy), repair muscles and make adaptations to improve strength and performance. Failure to rest will cause symptoms of overtraining and a reduction in performance and health.

Methods of aiding your body recuperate include warming down after exercise, consuming a diet combining carbohydrate and protein, rehydration, static stretching and massage. A diet with both carbohydrate and protein has been shown to be more effective for recovery. Carbohydrate will replenish your body's glycogen stores, whereas protein will provide the essential amino acids used to repair muscle tissue damaged during exercise. Rehydration is the first port of call however and can be achieved using water or certain sports drinks. However my recommendation would be to drink milk as a recent study in the British Journal of Nutrition (Shirreffs et al 2007) found it to be an effective post exercise rehydration drink when compared to water and sports drinks.

FITNESS TIP 8 – Progression

In order to continually improve you must alter your training program as soon as there is any sign of a plateau. If you are to follow Fitness Tip 6 then it is even more important to have progression in your program, otherwise your body will adapt and you will no longer be working at a high intensity for the same workout and will no longer be benefiting from the effects of HIIT. There are various ways of progressing your workout. For example you could increase the volume of your exercises, reduce rest periods in between exercises, work unilaterally instead of bilaterally or just increase the pace of the exercise that you were performing in the first place. You do not need to change all of these aspects of your program in order to gain progression, just pick one and you will find it much more of a challenge than before.

FITNESS TIP 9 – Train With Someone

There is nothing harder than motivating yourself to do a high intensity workout on your own. It is much harder to push yourself and gain the quality of results that you probably desire. Try and get a friend to train with you, or join a group fitness class where there are other like minded individuals who will help you along. Another alternative is to hire a personal trainer who will be able to design a specific program tailored to your needs and motivate you into following it.

FITNESS TIP 10 – Avoid Too Much Time Off From Training

As I am sure we have all found out, it doesn't take long for the effects of exercise to reverse. As I mentioned earlier it is important to rest and recuperate, however there's nothing worse than starting over when so much hard work has been done. A week or two's complete rest is beneficial if you have been involved in high intensity training and competition for a long period of time, for example during a football season. After this some moderate exercise can be undertaken just to keep you ticking over prior to high intensity training commencing. Those of you that train hard regularly but are not involved in high level competition can afford to continue all year round as long as regular periods of recuperation are allowed for.

For more Information visit: www.henrycleminson.co.uk