

FITNESS MATTERS

GOOD NEWS ABOUT SHAPING UP

SPOUSAL SUPPORT

*Exercise buddies
keep their vows*

A his-and-her approach can help couples stay married to an exercise program.

So says an Indiana University study of married men and women, some who joined a 1½-hour evening adult fitness program without spouses and some who joined with them.

After one year those who were sans spouse had attended about half of the three-days-a-week sessions. But the with-spouse group made 60 percent of the sessions. Only 10 percent of the couples quit versus 40 percent of women without a spouse and 22 percent of men without a spouse.

These results can apply to unmarried exercisers, too. You and friends or family members who exercise can encourage and support one another the same way that spouses do, explains Janet P. Wallace, Ph.D.

Wallace notes that no matter how hard fitness experts pound home the pluses of exercise, only 15 percent of the nation exercise enough to achieve health benefits. Enough, she says, means burning about 2,000 calories a week, which usually works out to four 45-minute vigorous workouts a week.

"We may see a lot of people out exercising, but it could be because it's just a sunny day," says Wallace.

MORNING GLORY

*Early-bird exercisers
stick to it better*

If you're an up-and-at-'em a.m. exerciser, chances are you'll adhere to a fitness program better than your p.m. counterparts.

A 23-month study of 263 cardiac



Couples are more likely to keep their exercise commitments.

rehabilitation patients at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan, found that morning (6:30–8:30) exercisers made 68 percent of sessions, versus 60 percent for the afternoon (4–6) group. In the a.m. group, 58 percent quit, versus 63 percent in the p.m. group.

"Things come up in the day, and many people put off exercise," says Pamela Reed, R.N. "After work they may be exhausted and just want to put their feet up."

This study won't sway those who find exercise to be an afternoon delight, but if you're starting to exercise, choose a time that will help you stay loyal to a program.

EXERCISE AND SEX

Does one enhance the other?

Gearing up for exercise may be easier after you read the results of a new survey.

Some 8,000 women, ages 18 to 45, were asked about how exercise affected their sexuality. Eighty-three percent said they had done aerobic exercise three-plus times a week for at least three months; 25 percent of the

regular exercisers said they felt increased sexual desire after exercising; 40 percent reported they had an increased ability to be aroused; and 25 percent admitted that exercise did in fact increase their ability to climax.

Several factors seem to be at play here. Activities like aerobic dance usually include sexy apparel. Many women lost weight by exercising, which helped them feel better about their looks. And exercise has been shown to boost self-confidence, which is a factor in sexuality.

While moderate aerobic exercise seemed to make sex better for many women, more exercise can make sex worse. "You have to be careful about that," says Linda De Villers, the psychologist in West Los Angeles, California, who did the survey. "If it becomes an obsessive kind of exercise, then it's almost as if it's a substitute for sex."

CROSS-TRAINING

*Spicing up your
exercise diet*

Fitness tends to hit below the belt. Our legs love it as we run or bike, while the rest of our body withers.

Cross-training—doing more than one activity regularly—says "whoa" to the withering. Such full-bodied fitness minimizes the monotony and injuries that may come with repeating the same old exercise.

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