



# learning to love exercise

Andrew Cate

**W**hen people say they don't like exercise, what they usually mean is that they haven't enjoyed the exercise programs they've tried in the past. They may have gotten sweaty and red-faced or felt embarrassed about doing something that didn't suit them. They may have worked too hard too early and felt sore, or perhaps they simply hated the gym environment.

However, the benefits from exercise are numerous and indisputable. If you have health and fitness goals that are important to you, then physical activity can help you achieve them. So what else is holding you back from moving more?

## examine your attitude

If you have a positive attitude and can find ways to make your exercise enjoyable, you will be much more likely to stick to it. Doing what you enjoy doesn't require much motivation as you'll feel enthusiastic and look forward to whatever it is.

Find an activity you are passionate about and exercise will never seem like a chore. You need to have an open mind when you try new activities or do them in a different way. If you've been inactive for a while, it may take a little time to start enjoying the feeling of movement.

So take small steps and ease into your exercise routine. It takes time to transform yourself from inactive

to active. And remember, you don't have to sweat profusely or go through extreme discomfort to derive benefit. The phrase "no pain, no gain" doesn't apply when you set out on a program of exercise.

## vary activity type

Choose an aerobic activity, such as walking, cycling, swimming or slow jogging as your primary activity. But if you think that doing the same thing every day sounds boring, it may help to try a variety of exercises. This is known as cross-training, where you do a number of different activities on different days.

Cross-training can help you maintain your motivation and interest

while also giving you a broader base of fitness. If you focus on a variety of activities that you enjoy, you'll be more likely to incorporate them into your everyday life.

### being your best

It's only natural to want to look good, feel great and perform at your peak. That is what is so great about exercise: it helps to bring out the best in you.

What could be better than a journey where you constantly strive to reach a goal, then reach it, set a higher goal and reach that? You get more fit and lean by going a little faster or a little longer or lifting a little more weight. It's also a great way to help you focus on the *process* of exercise instead of the *results*.

If you constantly strive to beat your previous personal best, you will lift your sense of self-worth and get more out of exercise—and you'll probably lose body fat in the process.

### have an action plan

Have a notebook to write down your exercise details. It can be your day-to-day diary, a loose-leaf folder or a computer spreadsheet. But it is helpful and motivating to track your progress, writing down your long-term goals, your exercise plan and your actual exercise accomplished throughout the week.

When you plan your week, be creative and include a good balance between your primary fat-burning exercise and more enjoyable activities.

### fun fitness gadgets

Another way to add enjoyment to your exercise routine is to use some of the available technology, equipment and gadgetry.

Exercise machines offer convenience and privacy, making it possible to exercise in front of the television and to keep active on days when the weather is miserable. Choose machines that mimic the most effective exercises, such as treadmills and elliptical trainers.

There are also some great devices to help you monitor your progress, such as heart rate monitors and pedometers.

The options are really only limited by your budget. What's more, portable music players or your smart phone will allow you to easily put


your entire music collection in one place so you can exercise with your favourite tunes playing.

### how long?

It will take some people longer than others to learn to love exercise. All good things require an investment of your time.

As exercise becomes more of a habit, you'll start to feel fitter and more energetic, which is self-rewarding. (You

might even feel bad if you miss a day of exercise.) Eventually, you might find yourself wanting to be active on weekends and holidays instead of hanging around doing nothing.

Is it possible to unleash the inner athlete inside you? It is easier when you don't have to force yourself to exercise—when you actually *want* to do it. Health and fitness can gradually become a passion. Why not make it yours? 



## discover your exercise personality

Use the following quiz to determine what to look for and what to avoid when you exercise. Every time you check Yes, consider the solution that's offered. The more times you check No, the easier it should be for you to find an activity you enjoy.

- 1 Is your current state of fitness a concern to you? .....** **No. Go to 2**  
Yes: The best start is a gentle walking program. Even 10 minutes a day will get you started and build your fitness gradually.
- 2 Are you worried that you don't have enough coordination to exercise? .....** **No. Go to 3**  
Yes: Start off with something easy like walking or a stationary bike to establish a base of fitness. Challenge yourself as your confidence grows.
- 3 Do you dislike the competitive nature of some types of exercise? .....** **No. Go to 4**  
Yes: Avoid team sports or a gym membership. Choose activities such as walking, where the only person to compete against and compare yourself to is yourself.
- 4 Would you like to include social contact with others as part of your exercise routine? .....** **No. Go to 5**  
Yes: Try to find a training partner for your new exercise routine. You could also try a team sport such as basketball, volleyball, touch football or tennis.
- 5 Is the cost of programs or equipment a concern for you? .....** **No. Go to 6**  
Yes: A gentle walking program is absolutely free. You may also be able to find free exercise demonstrations on YouTube or borrow an exercise DVD from your local library.
- 6 Are you embarrassed to be seen exercising? .....** **No. Go to 7**  
Yes: Start off with an indoor activity such as exercise equipment or an exercise video to build your fitness and confidence.
- 7 Do you have any injuries that will make exercise difficult? .....** **No. Go to 8**  
Yes: Visit a trainer or physical therapist who can design an exercise program that addresses your injury concerns. Water aerobics may be suitable.
- 8 Would you prefer to exercise indoors? .....** **No. Go to 9**  
Yes: Activities you can do inside include exercise machines, exercise videos and exercising in a gym.
- 9 Would you prefer to exercise outdoors? .....** **No. Go to 10**  
Yes: You have plenty of options, such as walking, slow jogging, cycling, hiking, tennis and team sports.
- 10 Do you only have minimal spare time available to exercise? .....** **No.**  
Yes: Choose activities that are close to home to minimise your travel time. You may also need to accumulate your activity in short bursts.