

HOMEBODIES

HEALTH & FITNESS AT HOME

THE **FITNESS @ HOME** HANDBOOK

The Benefits of Exercise	1
The Five Components of Physical Fitness	4
10 Reasons To Work With A Personal Trainer	7
Choosing A Personal Trainer	10
In-Home Exercise Equipment	13

Exercise is essential to good health and is, quite literally, the fountain of youth. You can start exercising right now—regardless of age or physical ability—and almost immediately feel its benefits ...

- **Prevention of chronic diseases** ... Exercise regularly to prevent, or manage, high blood pressure and boost the “good” cholesterol while decreasing the bad—keep your heart healthy by lowering the buildup of plaque in your arteries. You may prevent osteoporosis, certain types of cancer and type 2 diabetes.
- **An increased level of energy**... Regular physical activity delivers oxygen and nutrients to your tissues and helps your entire cardiovascular system. You’ll improve the circulation of blood through your heart and blood vessels—when your heart and lungs work more efficiently, you’ll have more energy to do the things you enjoy.
- **Improved mood** ... Exercise in the morning and you’ll start your day energized and ready to face whatever comes your way. Work out in the afternoon and avoid that mid-day slump. Enjoy a 30 minute walk in the evening to relieve the stress of the day and get a good night’s sleep. The production of Endorphins (the “feel good hormones”) is increased through exercise. Nothing improves mood and suppresses depression better than those endorphins.
- **Improved weight management** ... Add a little more physical activity to each day to burn more calories and increase your level of energy. Your improved stamina will allow you, over time, to increase the time and intensity of movement—the more intense the activity, the more calories you’ll burn, the easier it will be to manage your weight.
- **Increased self-esteem** ... Gaining control of your body—in terms of both size and weight—increases self-esteem. When you look better, you’re more confident, which empowers you in everything you do. The self-discipline required and learned through regular exercise spills over into other areas of your life and you will be better able to make other necessary and desirable changes.

- **Better sleep** ... There's nothing like a good's night sleep—in fact, sleep is an essential component to good health. Regular physical activity can help you fall asleep faster and deepen your sleep—benefit from its restorative qualities and face your day with renewed energy.
- **Improved sex life** ... Regular physical activity can provide the energy and positive outlook you need to improve your sex life. It can lead to enhanced arousal for women, and men who exercise regularly are less likely to have problems with erectile dysfunction—especially as they get older.
- **Increased mental focus** ... The latest research shows that exercise helps keep the brain sharp well into old age. Anything that involves mental acuity (focus and concentration) is improved. You also stand a much better chance of avoiding such diseases as Alzheimer's and senility.
- **Increased levels of strength and stamina** ... Every physical thing you do becomes easier. You are fit enough to take on tasks you once thought impossible, and to continue beyond your previous limitations at activities you enjoy.
- **Decreased levels of stress** ... As you increase deep restorative sleep, energy, strength, stamina and mental focus through regular exercise, your level of stress will decrease over time. A good hard workout can relieve pent-up, debilitating stress whenever you need it.

The benefits of regular exercise just go on and on ...

- Improves digestion
- Adds radiance to the complexion
- Improves body shape
- Tones and firms muscles
- Provides more muscular definition Makes you limber
- Increases lean muscle tissue in the body
- Improves appetite for healthy foods
- Alleviates menstrual cramps
- Alters and improves muscle chemistry
- Increases metabolic rate

- Enhances coordination and balance
- Improves posture
- Eases and possibly eliminates back problems and pain
- Makes the body use calories more efficiently
- Lowers resting heart rate
- Improves body composition
- Decreases fat tissue more easily
- Makes body more agile
- Reduces joint discomfort
- Improves athletic performance
- Increases your range of motion
- Enhances immune system
- Enables the body to utilize energy more efficiently
- Increases enzymes in the body which burn fat
- Enhances oxygen transport throughout the body
- Improves liver functioning
- Enhances feedback through the nervous system
- Helps to alleviate varicose veins
- Increases the weight and size of the heart
- Makes calcium transport in the heart and body more efficient

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Find an activity you enjoy—ballroom dancing, biking, wall climbing, hiking (to name a few)—and begin reaping the benefits of regular physical activity today. You will face your life with renewed vitality and joy as you improve your health and sense of well-being.

Whether you're new to exercise or you've been exercising for years, a well-rounded fitness training program is essential to good health. Include these five components—aerobic exercise, strength training, stretching, core exercise and balance training—to create a balanced routine that challenges the entire body.

Aerobic Exercise

Aerobic or cardio endurance training is, quite literally, the heart of any fitness training program. Aerobic exercise induces fast and deep breathing which maximizes the amount of oxygen in your blood. Aerobic fitness means greater efficiency of the heart, lungs and blood vessels in transporting oxygen throughout your body. This makes it easier to complete routine physical tasks and rise to unexpected challenges, such as running to your car or walking up stairs

Aerobic exercises utilize the large muscle groups and increase your heart rate. Walking, jogging, biking, swimming, dancing, water aerobics are all good examples of aerobic exercise. Spread your aerobic training throughout the week with a minimum goal of two hours per week of moderate aerobic activity or one hour per week of vigorous aerobic activity.

Strength Training

Strength training includes any exercise that causes the muscles to contract against an external resistance. When you lift weight to get stronger or more toned, you are performing resistance exercise. Resistance exercise causes microscopic damage or tears to the muscle cells, which are quickly repaired by the body and help the muscles regenerate and grow stronger.

The external resistance used in strength training can be dumbbells, rubber exercise tubing, exercise balls, or any other object that causes the muscles to contract. You use your own body weight as resistance when doing push-ups or abdominal crunches. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that resistance training should be progressive in nature, individualized, and provide a stimulus to all the major muscle groups (chest, back, shoulders, arms, abdominals, and legs). Two to three half hour strength training sessions spread over the week are sufficient. Since your muscles heal and grow when you aren't working out, it's necessary to leave time between workouts for recovery.

Since aerobic and strength training exercises cause your muscles to contract and flex, it is important to make stretching part of your routine. To keep muscles loose and less susceptible to injury, you should stretch after you exercise when your muscles are warm and receptive. Ideally, you'll stretch whenever you exercise. If you don't exercise regularly, you should stretch at least three times a week to maintain flexibility. Consider adding a day or two of Yoga to your weekly exercise regime. In addition to deep stretches that increase strength, Yoga can improve the range of motion of your joints, improve posture and can even help relieve stress.

Core stability

Your core muscles are located in your abdomen, lower back and pelvis. These help protect your back and connect upper and lower body movements. Core exercises help train your muscles to brace the spine and enable you to use your upper and lower body muscles more effectively.

Any exercise that uses the trunk of your body without support, including abdominal crunches, is considered core exercises. An exercise ball is an excellent tool for building core strength as many core muscles are used to maintain the ball's position.

Balance training

Even if you are strong, flexible and aerobically fit, you can have poor balance. Training can help you maintain and improve balance and is important since balance tends to deteriorate with age—leading to falls and fractures. There are many simple exercises you can do to improve balance—simply standing on one leg for increasing periods of time will improve your overall stability. Activities such as tai chi are excellent for promoting excellent balance.

Designing and incorporating a fitness training program that fully incorporates these five elements can be daunting. Improper form, increasing activity too quickly or too intensely, even lifting weights that are too heavy can lead to injury. Enlist the help of a personal trainer versed in aerobic fitness, muscular fitness, stretching, core exercise and balance training to design a safe and effective exercise plan specific to your needs. A personal trainer will address one or more of the five elements in every fitness session to be sure all of them are included in your regular routine.

You may need one session with a personal trainer to get you on the right track, ensure your program is balanced, and answer your questions. You may prefer to work with a trainer for several months to get in the habit of exercise. Work with a trainer indefinitely to train safety and effectively. Just make that call today to get you started on the strong, healthy body you want.

- 1. You don't know where to start ...** If you've never been particularly active or into exercise or haven't exercised since high school, you might not know what to do, when to do it or at what intensity. An in-home Personal Trainer will assess your current level of fitness and teach the best exercises to build your strength using proper form to avoid injury. Over time, your Personal Trainer will add more weight and change-up your routine to keep you growing and to keep you motivated. A Personal Trainer can also help you set realistic goals based on the foods you eat and the amount of time you can dedicate to exercise—then design a short and long term plan to accomplish them.
- 2. You don't like gyms and wish you could workout at home ...** You think you can't get a great workout at home, but dread going to a gym. The good news is that a Personal Trainer can give you an incredible workout at home using all kinds of portable workout equipment—including bands, balls or free weights. In fact, a Personal Trainer can provide a challenging program without any equipment at all using Yoga, Pilates and other exercises designed for dancers. You don't need a gym full of exercise equipment to get the body of your dreams.
- 3. You can't stay motivated and need more accountability ...** A Personal Trainer is inherently motivated, and a great trainer knows how to motivate others. Even on the days you don't feel up to a strenuous workout, your Personal Trainer can get you moving and before you know it, you're done. A regular appointment makes you accountable to your Personal Trainer, and the time and money you're spending to get in shape makes you more accountable to yourself.
- 4. You exercise all the time, but never seem to progress ...** You may have been exercising over a period of time, but don't feel any stronger or have any more energy than when you started. A Personal Trainer will help you break through this "plateau. A Personal Trainer will make sure you are using proper form—essential to building strength and avoiding injury. In addition, the body ceases to grow stronger if you do the same routine over and over again. A Personal Trainer can continually introduce new exercises to challenge your body in different ways to increase strength and insure progress.

5. **You're not sure what you're doing and want some supervision ...** Proper form is one of the most important aspects of exercise and the on-going supervision of a personal trainer will help you get the most from your workout while preventing injury. How many people exercise but never progress because they aren't exercising properly. How many people have attempted an exercise program from a book or video only to pull a muscle or get a serious injury. Your Personal Trainer will encourage you to work a little harder than you would on your own so you get the most for your exercise buck.
6. **You're bored with your workout ...** A Personal Trainer can continually change your routine so you don't get bored. A varied routine will also challenge your body in new ways that will increase your strength—progress is always a great motivator!
7. **You have a hard time pushing yourself ...** A Personal Trainer will ask you for just one more push up or just one more crunch—and “just one more” adds up to real growth when it comes to strength training. It's easy to fall into a malaise around your workout—you tend to exercise by rote and don't have the will to push harder. Although you might not like it at the time, you'll appreciate that little push from your Personal Trainer that results in the strong, lean body you desire.
8. **You want to workout on your own, but don't know how ...** You have the motivation to workout on your own, you just aren't sure what to do. A Personal Trainer can develop a program you'll be able to do on your own and make sure you're doing the program properly before setting you free. When you feel the need to move to the next level or become bored with the program, you can have your Personal Trainer develop a new program based on what you've learned about your body and your exercise preferences.

9. **You have special needs, health issues or an old injury ...** Check with your doctor to be sure it's okay to exercise. A Personal Trainer with the right education and experience can provide a safe exercise program even if you have heart disease, arthritis or other condition. Personal Trainers learn how to work with injuries as part of their certification program and can teach you how to exercise around your old injury while preventing new ones from occurring. If you're pregnant or just had a baby, there are Personal Trainers with pre- and post-natal certifications specifically designed to keep you and your baby safe and healthy.

10. **You want to excel at an upcoming sporting event ...** Even if you're an experienced runner, golfer or tennis pro, you can benefit by working with a Personal Trainer. A Personal Trainer can observe your program and find your weak spots—then focus your training on these specific areas. If the event is taking place some time in the future, a Personal Trainer can help map out a program to make sure you're more than ready, that you'll excel. There are Personal Trainers with expertise in just about every sport—find one that knows your sport inside and out and you're on your way to the winner's circle.

A personal trainer can help you lose weight, get healthy and/or build muscle. A good trainer can set up a program that meets your goals and teaches you the best way to exercise. It is important to educate yourself about personal training before you make a commitment.

What is a personal trainer?

A personal trainer is an individual educated and certified through a reputable fitness organization to teach all aspects of physical fitness to his/her client. This person must be qualified to assess your fitness level, set up a program for you and keep you motivated. A good personal trainer will push you past your comfort level—something difficult to do on your own. A trainer also provides:

- Guidance on reaching your goals
- Education about aerobic and strength training
- A reason to commit to your program
- Accountability
- Ways to help track your progress

What happens in a personal training session?

Each session lasts about an hour. The first meeting is spent assessing your fitness level, taking body measurements, recording your exercise and health history and personal fitness goals. After that, you'll spend most of your time on strength training and/or aerobic training.

What to look for in a personal trainer

- **Education:** A personal trainer should be certified through a reputable personal training organization. An exercise science or other related college degree isn't necessary, but the more education your trainer has, the better your workouts will be.
- **CPR Certification:** A personal trainer should have an updated certification in CPR and/or first aid.

- **Experience:** Make sure your trainer has several years of experience, especially in relation to your goals.
- **Specifics:** If you have a specific medical problem, injury or condition (such as being pregnant, heart problems, diabetes, etc.) make sure your trainer has education in these areas and will work with your doctor.
- **A good listener:** A good trainer will listen closely to what you say and make sure he understands your goals.
- **Attention:** A good trainer will be focused only on you during your sessions
- **Tracking progress:** A good trainer will regularly assess your progress and change things if necessary.
- **Personality:** It's important since you'll be working very closely with this person. Make sure you get along with your trainer and feel comfortable asking questions.
- **Additional Credentials:** As training methods evolve, the demand for "specially trained" personal trainers continues to grow. Those with additional education and certifications in Pilates, Yoga, Tai Chi, kettle bell training, stability balls, lifestyle management, and sports conditioning are available.

The majority of reputable trainers will abide by the professional code of ethics of their certifying organization—professionalism is highly stressed by all respected organizations. You're not with the right personal trainer if he/she:

- **Tries to sell you dietary supplements.** Most personal trainers are not nutritional counselors or medical professionals and should never advice clients on diet or dietary supplements.
- **Says his or her style of training is the only way to get results.** Although self-confidence is a positive attribute, different organizations teach different methods for client success. There is no single correct method to train.

- **Is hesitant to provide you with proof of credentials or references.** This can be a sign that the trainer's credentials may be less than credible.
- **Is uninsured.** Liability insurance is a must for every personal trainer.
- **Is not punctual about appointments, or is unavailable via telephone or email.** A professional trainer should be punctual and ready for appointments, and reasonably available to answer client questions after hours.
- **Is unclear about the cancellation policy.** Clients have a right to know how much time they have to cancel a session in advance without being obligated to pay the fee.
- **Does not keep up with current developments in the field of exercise science.** It is important to keep abreast of any advances or new developments in this ever-changing profession. This can be done by taking accredited continuing education courses offered by recognized certifying organizations, and reading professional publications such *The Journal of Sports Medicine*.
- **Does not maintain current CPR certification.** Every trainer must maintain current CPR certification and be trained in basic lifesaving skills. Do not hire a trainer until you have verified this certification. Common certifying organizations are the American Red Cross and the American Heart Association.
- **Does not practice what he/she preaches.** Those who do not train their own body may lack the dedication and motivation needed to inspire their clients.

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If you're new to exercise, a personal trainer can clarify and set your fitness goals and design a program that is both safe and effective. If you already exercise on a regular basis, a personal trainer can teach you new techniques that will increase the challenge to your body and keep you motivated. Anyone can benefit from the services of a personal trainer.

Exercising at home has many advantages. If you decide home is the best place for you, the next step is to decide what equipment you need. Before you head out to the nearest shop, here are a range of choices of might consider.

- **Jump rope:** Jumping rope is a high-intensity cardiovascular workout that requires balance, strength and agility. You can use it nearly anytime and anywhere as a complete workout or for quick intervals between weight training sets or circuit training stations. Pack one in your suitcase and you'll miss another workout due to your travel schedule.
- **Exercise ball:** An exercise ball allows a wide range of exercises to be performed. An exercise ball is constructed of elastic soft PVC with a diameter of approximately 14 to 34 inches and is filled with air. The air pressure is changed by removing a valve stem and either filling with air or letting the ball deflate. It is most often used in physical therapy, athletic training and exercise. It can also be used for weight training. The ball is known by a number of different names including balance ball, body ball, fitness ball, exercise ball, Pilates ball, stability ball or yoga ball. It is larger and much lighter than a medicine ball.
- **Body Bar:** Builds lean body mass and increases muscle definition. These 4' long body bars are weighted with foam cushioned padding and color coded end caps to indicate bar weight. Great for extended workouts. The weighted bar provides even weight distribution for stability during exercises. May be used to increase flexibility and balance, are ideal for core strength and functional training.
- **Contour Weights:** Strengthen and tone muscles using these neoprene covered, 28-inch barbell-style tubes wrap comfortably around your body. Soft, nylon end-stirrups may be used as handles for upper-body exercises, positioned around feet for lower-body exercises, or you can buckle the ends for secure placement around the waist or over the shoulders. The Contour Weights are soft, flexible and weighted.

- **Kettle bell:** Kettle bells are used for squats, throws, cleans, jerks, snatches and rotation swings. Vinyl dipped iron bells with rubber bottom to protect floors, are the ideal tool for all-around athletic development. If you like lifting weights, kettle bells will increase your workout even more. Kettle bells teach the user how to use momentum in ways that mimic real life situations that cannot be duplicated by machines, barbells, or dumbbells.
- **Dumbbells:** Adjustable dumbbells consist of a metal bar whose centre portion is often engraved with a crosshatch pattern (knurling) to improve grip. Weight disks (plates) are slid onto the outer portions of the dumbbell and secured with clips or collars. Alternatively, a dumbbell may have smooth ends with plates being secured by a sprung collar.
- **Fixed-weight dumbbells:** These are weights created in a dumbbell shape. Expensive varieties consist of cast iron, sometimes coated with rubber for safety. Cheaper versions consist of a rigid plastic shell that is filled with concrete.
- **"Selectorized" dumbbells:** Adjustable dumbbells whose weight is changed mechanically—for example, by turning a dial or moving a selector pin—rather than manually adding or removing plates. This makes it very easy to change the weight of the dumbbell between exercises. Such dumbbells often include stands that double as storage for the additional weights not being used for a particular exercise.
- **Barbell:** A barbell is a piece of exercise equipment used in weight training, weightlifting and power lifting. It consists of a metal bar, one or more sets of weight plates, and a set of collars. Barbells range in length from 4 feet to 7 feet. The central portion varies in diameter and is often engraved with a knurled crosshatch to help lifters get a good grip. Disc weights (plates) are slid onto the outer portions of the bar to obtain the desired total weight. These weights are often secured with collars to prevent them from sliding off during the exercise (which can result in injuries) or flinging the unevenly loaded barbell through the air.

- **Resistance Bands:** You can always buy resistance bands in stores, but if you're looking for more options and, sometimes, more quality, you may find you have to order them online. Get a variety of bands. Most bands are color-coded according to tension level (e.g., light, medium, heavy, very heavy). It's best to have at least three—light, medium and heavy since different muscle groups will require different levels of resistance. Get comfortable, easy to use bands. Try to get bands with padded handles and make sure you don't have to change them out.
- **Resistance Band Accessories:** One key to using bands is having different ways to attach them. If you have a sturdy pole or stair rail in your house to wrap the band around for exercises like chest presses or seated rows, you may not need much more than bands. But, if you don't, you may want a door attachment. You can also buy ankle cuffs, different handles and other accessories.
- **Exercise Mats:** Exercise mats are available in a variety of styles, sizes and colors. A Pilates mat can also be used for various floor exercises and stretching. Pilates and yoga mats are similar in that they are about the same size and used for exercises done on the floor. However, a Pilates mat needs to be thicker than most yoga mats. Because there are so many standing poses in yoga, mats used for yoga have to let the practitioner feel the floor. This is not so important with a Pilates mat. In fact, Pilates mats are thicker to provide padding between you and the floor. Also, yoga mats are sticky, designed to prevent slipping, an unlikely hazard with Pilates exercises. A good Pilates mat is at least a half inch thick and should be firm. A mat that is too soft will not support balance and alignment properly. Make sure that the mat is long enough and wide enough. Typical roll up mat lengths are 72" - 86" and widths vary from 21" to 39".
- **Roll-Up Mats:** Mats that roll up offer the benefits of being portable, stashable, and easy to find at stores or online. These mats are usually made of dense foam or rubber. Closed cell foam mats are the best in the roll up category. They tend to be thicker and firmer than regular foam mats. The regular foam mats are usually a softer foam covered with something like vinyl, and they are often too squishy. Look for a mat that comes with straps to keep the mat rolled up for easier storage and carrying.

- **Folding Mats:** Folding mats are very desirable when you get the higher quality types. These higher quality folding mats are heavier and not quite as portable, though they usually do have carrying straps attached. If you want to outfit a home studio, this is the way to go.