

## ***Are you getting the results you want from exercising?***

Like everything we invest time and effort in, we expect to get results from exercising. Are you getting results from your exercise program? Exercise is work (that's why they call it 'working out') so you probably do it for a reason. There are many different reasons people exercise so there are also many different ways people can expect to see results. In this article, a number of the benefits of exercise are discussed. Make sure you know why you are exercising so you can know if you are accomplishing your goals.

### **1) Weight Loss and Maintenance**

The number one reason people exercise is either to lose weight or keep from gaining weight. As we age we tend to gain weight. This is due to a number of factors but mostly because we tend to be less active as we get older due in large part to our lifestyle. We don't have as much free time to play as kids do. Our metabolism may slow down which is largely due to lack of vigorous exercise and loss of muscle mass. So exercise is a great way to step-up our metabolism and help to burn more calories. There are a few ways to track whether you are getting the your desired weight. First, you can weigh yourself. If you are trying to lose weight I encourage you to weigh yourself often. Don't be obsessive but once a day, preferably first thing in the morning, is a good tool to keep yourself on track. Don't worry if your weight bounces around a pound or two, that's normal variation. But if you see your weight increase a pound or two and stay there for more than a couple of days, it's time to buckle down and get more serious about your eating and exercising. Another way to know if you are losing weight is to note how tight your pants are fitting. People often say that when they begin exercising, they don't see the scale move but their clothes fit a little looser. What happens is you lose some fat, usually around the waist, but at the same time start to add a little more muscle when you begin working out. So while your weight may not change, your proportions do. A third way to test if you are happy with your weight is to do the mirror test. Stand in front of your bathroom mirror in your birthday suit and ask yourself if you like the way you look. This is a brutally honest test but sometimes that's what it takes.

### **2) Improved Fitness**

If you exercise you probably are doing it to improve your fitness. Depending on your own goals, fitness can mean many things. To some it's just being able to keep active and do daily functions (walking, climbing stairs) a little easier. To athletes, it means improving their physical ability in their chosen sport. Set yourself some sort of goal if you want to improve your fitness. It may be to increase the weight on all the weight exercises you do by 5 or 10 pounds. Or, it could be to last 30 minutes on the elliptical machine, so run 3 miles faster on the treadmill. Whatever you do, set some goal that can challenge yourself to become better if improved fitness is a goal, and then track it. With a little thought and imagination, you can set yourself measurable goals on any exercise program. It's fun to watch yourself get better. Keep a workout sheet and keep track of what you are doing so you can see the progress as you go along.

### **3) Feel Better**

One of the great benefits of exercise is that it makes you feel better. While you may not necessarily feel better *during* exercise, you almost certainly will afterwards, both immediately and long term. Some people enjoy the act of exercising more than others. Some just love it while others don't really enjoy it but do it because they know 'its good for them'. Regardless of which one describes you, people almost universally feel better when they are done exercising. A number of members mention that the hardest part of exercise is walking in the door. Once here, it's not so bad. The reason they keep coming back is the instant feedback. Once you have done your workout, you do feel better. Part of that may be endorphins released during exercise which relax us. It may also be that our bodies like to move and after sitting at your desk all day, getting our stiff, inactive muscles moving, heart pumping and blood flowing just feels good. Longer term we also feel better after being on a regular exercise program. We feel better about ourselves, are able to do things we couldn't before, we may get sick less and/or feel younger! This aspect of exercise is more difficult to quantify, but you know it when you feel it.

#### 4) **Have More Energy**

Another benefit of exercise is that it can make you feel more energetic. Have you ever dragged yourself to the gym and by the time you left, you actually felt less tired and more alert and awake than when you came? While you may think that exercise will make you more tired, it can actually have the opposite effect. By getting your body moving and blood flowing, you wake up your body for several hours after you are done exercising. This is why some people can't exercise late at night – it keeps them awake. Another benefit of exercise is that it can also help you sleep more soundly. This in turn refreshes you and helps you feel more alert and awake during the daytime. So note how you feel before and after you exercise, and how well you sleep on days that you do exercise. I think you'll notice a difference.

If you are coming into the fitness center and don't really know what you expect to get out of it, give it some thought. Set yourself some sort of goal that is measurable. It's so much more effective if you have a goal to work towards, and rewarding when you accomplish it. Keep setting more challenging goals and knock them off. This will keep you interested and excited about staying in shape.

**Quick Fit Tip of the Month:** If exercise was available in a pill, it would be the most widely prescribed drug in the world.

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