

Tips for Creating a Safe and Effective Workout Plan

By: Simon, *Rec Center Personal Trainer*

In order to create an effective work out regimen, we must take into consideration some key factors. Understanding how our body utilizes fuel is crucial to meet our different fitness goals. Setting realistic goals and using safe methods of exercise progression and injury prevention are equally important.

Besides improving or maintaining cardiovascular fitness through cardio workouts, we often aim to target the fat storage in our body, in order to lose weight or inches. Two major energy storages for the human body are the fats in the adipose tissue and glucose in the liver stored as glycogen. Both sources of aerobic energy are used during cardio exercise; however our body is as selective as it is specific. During low intensity exercise, the percentage of aerobic energy derived from oxidization of fatty acids in the blood is significantly higher than it is during intense exercise. Conversely, the percent derived from carbohydrates increases with exercise intensity. So it is safe to assume that the relative percentage of calories burned from fat is higher during low to moderate intensity exercise. It is also important to understand that the total amount of calories used is expectedly lower in this case than high intensity exercise, thus the total amount of calories burned from fat is higher during high intensity exercise but at a lower overall percentage. A well-rounded exercise plan should include aspects of both levels of intensity in varying amounts, depending on your fitness goals.

Goal setting will increase adherence and motivation, which is why it's crucial to create sensible goals. Analyzing your current level of fitness, including weight, muscular strength and endurance, aerobic power (VO_2), percent body fat and flexibility, helps you create goals based on a starting point. Fitness Services at the Rec offer a variety of tests for you to gauge your personal fitness level through a Fitness Assessment package. Setting immediate goals that are achievable and measurable, such as how long you can maintain 200 watts on a stationary bike, will serve as positive reinforcement and increase the likelihood that you will continue the regimen. After the short term goals are accomplished, gradually move to long-term goals such as decreasing body fat percentage and increasing cardiovascular endurance.

A new exercise regime has inherent risks that can expose an individual to stress related injuries and jeopardize exercise adherence and progress. The "5% rule" is a

helpful tool used to create workouts that continue to be challenging and beneficial by progressively overloading the body. Simply stated, individuals should increase the intensity or duration of exercise by no more than 5%, from one week to the next. This can be universally applied to all forms of exercise, including cardiovascular and resistance training programs. Adding too much, too soon may lead to extreme soreness or injury and reduce one's enjoyment and benefits of exercise. Injury prevention is crucial to any fitness plan, if not treated correctly, seemingly minor stresses and sprains may develop into major problems that not only compromise one's fitness goals but also one's personal welfare. When creating an exercise plan it is crucial to be informed, specific and safe!

While an organized workout plan is great for acquiring the necessary stressors to increase and maintain cardiovascular and muscular fitness levels, we often fail to recognize how our daily habits affect our overall well-being and caloric balance. The N.E.A.T. (non-exercising active thermogenesis) concept, courtesy of Professor Patty Freedson at the University of Massachusetts, identifies the importance of an overall active life style. In other words, N.E.A.T is amount of caloric consumption resulting from non-workout oriented activities, such as standing versus sitting, stairs versus elevator and walking or biking versus other transportation devices. It is necessary to understand that the amount of calories burned from these "non-exercise activities" varies greatly for individuals; while the expenditure of an additional one hundred calories per day from these active means can help maintain ideal body weight over a long period of time. I encourage you to take advantage of these simple ways to increase your energy output as it all adds up and will be better for you in the long run.

For assistance in creating a well planned workout regimen using all of these principles, make an appointment with a Personal Trainer at the Rec and get started on the right track today! Fitness Assessments are also a great way to evaluate your current fitness level and give you the data to create your own workout plan. Check out the Fitness Services website for appointment details. Stop by the front desk at the Rec Center to a schedule an appointment or call 346-1364 for more information. You can also learn more about Simon by visiting his biography on the web!