

New Year Fitness Resolutions

Have you made a New Year resolution to get fit, eat healthily and lose weight? Have you already started worrying about how long you will stick to it this year? If this sounds familiar and you're fed up with making promises to yourself you just can't keep then it's time to take a fresh approach to your fitness and try new exercises, activities and protocols that are sure to get results, provide inspiration and be time efficient so you are still making progress by the end of the year.

Here's how to get going...

- 1. Do single leg exercises** – I bet that for all your strength based exercises you still have both feet firmly fixed on the floor. Now it's time to go solo (each leg that is) and try single leg squats, single leg dead lifts and walking lunges, for example, to ensure greater isolation of the muscles and prevent developing imbalances in the strength of your legs. Incorporate these into your workout now.
- 2. Start super-setting** – This method of training is time efficient and involves performing two exercises for opposing body parts (for example quadriceps and hamstrings) one right after the other with little or no rest in between. This avoids wasting time waiting for one muscle group to recover before you perform a second set. Perform each combination three times, aiming for 10 to 12 reps for each exercise. Rest no more than 30 seconds between sets if you want to maximise your results. A good example is alternating squats with hamstring curls.
- 3. Alternate between Heavy and Light day workouts** – If you want to increase the number of days you work out without burning out then why not adopt my method of alternating each heavy workout with a lighter one whereby you may do a weight training session or sprint session on one day and an easy form of yoga or light cardio training on the next day. This is great for getting maximal results, keeping motivation high and allowing your body an active recovery.
- 4. Think and train like an athlete** – You may not be a 2012 hopeful but adopting the mentality and practices of an athlete will give you a no nonsense approach to exercise and meeting your goals. Firstly, treat training like a task at work, something on your 'to do' list that must be carried out by the end of the day. Secondly, when choosing exercises, think about function. For example, how will this exercise or routine improve my tennis at the weekend, help me climb the stairs or kick a ball around with the kids. One simple example would be multi-

directional lunges for stability and joint protection in tennis. If you can see that your gym efforts are improving the energy and performance of your life's activities then you'll be motivated to continue. Athletes see direct results from their training and you can too. I'm no longer a competing athlete but I still think like one!

5. **Keep a training diary** – Log your workout after each session to help with future planning and progressions. Even note the time of day of your workout and how you felt before, during and after the session. You may also want to add other activities from the day that may have been stressful or exhausting. This helps track your progress and better understand what other factors may improve or jeopardise your efforts.
6. **Adopt a post-exercise routine to achieve a speedy recovery** – A few healthy post-workout habits will get your muscles recovering quickly and make your next gym session more productive.
 1. Cool down by moving at a low intensity for about 10 minutes after your workout to bring down your heart rate and flush out the lactic acid (toxins) from your muscles.
 2. Stretch slowly to help relieve any muscle soreness and stiffness.
 3. Re-hydrate by increasing your fluid intake post-workout.
 4. Refuel with a snack rich in proteins and with a high glycaemic index to replace blood sugar levels instantly. Try a protein shake with a banana.
7. **Reward your Results** – Small rewards as you begin to reach your goals will motivate you each step of the way. But beware not to use food treats as a reward as these may jeopardise your good efforts. Instead, book a massage or buy yourself a new pair of jeans or even some new workout clothing to make you feel confident with your new body when you hit the gym!
8. **Nutrition Support** – Don't forget your diet. Why not follow an online weight loss programme or buy an app to record your calories and calculate your exact requirements. It is well documented that a consistent eating routine and careful planning lead to more successful weight loss than following a quick fix solution that will only serve to place you back at square one before you've taken down the Christmas decorations.

Good Luck!

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