

# MARK'S CORNER



## Top 10 Health and Fitness Resolutions

Why is it that our well-intentioned, heartfelt New Year resolutions usually crumble by February? Principally, there are two reasons. First off, we don't set ourselves clear, specific or realistic targets, talking instead in vague terms about 'losing weight' or 'getting healthier'. Secondly, we anticipate 'failure' right from the outset (after all, it's what we've always experienced in the past). Let's make this year different and tackle a few of these goals one at a time.



### **Get Specific About Your Goals**

When you formulate a new goal (or resolution) put it through the SMART test. Is the goal Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-framed? If not, then adjust it so that it is – and write it down. Compare 'I'm going to lose weight this year' to 'I'm going to lose ten pounds by March,' to get an idea of how much more compelling a SMART goal is.



### **Be Active Whenever You Can**

Think about the last time you got in the car to drive a 15-minute walk. Did you absolutely have to do it, because you were on a tight schedule, or because you were late to meet someone? If not, then could you have walked instead? This is the principle behind being active when you can – it acknowledges that fitting in activity or exercise isn't always possible but requires you to pledge that when there isn't anything to come between you and exercise, you do go ahead and work out.



### **Increase Fruit & Vegetables**

Fruit & vegetables are packed with health-promoting, disease-fighting phytonutrients, fiber, vitamins and minerals and ideally you should be consuming five to eight portions a day. If seems daunting, think about spreading your intake throughout the day.



### **Visit The Gym Often**

Research by the Fitness Industry Association found that the frequency with which an exercise newbie gets to the gym after joining is a predictor of their future success. Nearly 30 per cent of new gym members visited their club less than once a week during the first month, and it was these people who were most likely to have dropped out by the third month of membership. So once you've signed up, keep swiping that card until it becomes a habit.



### **Be Body Aware**

Body awareness isn't something that stops the moment you leave your exercise class – it's something you should be keeping tabs of 24-7. The key points to look out for are hunched, tight shoulders, a clenched jaw, a hanging-out stomach, a jutting-forward head and crossed limbs. If you can 'scan' your body regularly throughout the day, you'll become expert at recognizing when your posture is less than optimal and correcting it.

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## **Start A Training Journal**

Anyone who works out regularly (or plans to!) should keep a log or blog of what they do, including where they are at the outset (in terms of fitness level, weight and so on) and what their SMART goals are. You will find that keeping a diary or blog is motivating, fascinating and very useful. If you get a 10km personal best, you can look to see what sessions might have accounted for the improvement. It's also useful if you come up against an injury, or recurring illness – as you can look for signs of overtraining or overdoing things.



## **Get Your Fluid Intake Right**

We won't categorically say that you should drink two liters (approx. 68 oz) of water per day, as this has not been proven to be essential for every individual. But if you are regularly active and rarely drink a glass of the pure stuff, we urge you to increase your intake. While the cold weather may not make you feel so thirsty, overheated offices and public transport are very dehydrating. And though you may not feel it, you are still sweating during exercise in cold weather.



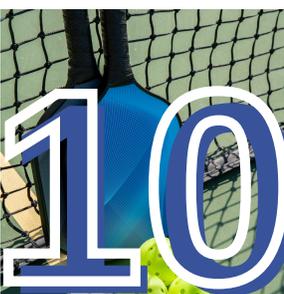
## **Find Balance In Your Fitness Activity**

If you love running, or have a passion for any specific activity, it is tempting to restrict yourself to just doing that one thing. But do so at your peril! It's really important to have a balance of different activities in your regime – including some strength work, some flexibility training and some aerobic exercise and some Cross-Training. You will reduce your risk of injury or burnout, gain fitness in neglected areas and you will almost certainly improve your performance in your favorite activity, too.



## **Don't Be So Intense In Your Training**

I'm not talking personality here, but effort level. Research shows that there are myriad benefits to be gained from high intensity exercise (a higher lactate threshold, greater calorie expenditure, improved cardiac output) - but there is also a lot to be said for gentler-paced workouts (such as increased fat utilization, stress reduction, lower blood pressure). And besides, working hard all the time compromises your immune system and leaves you vulnerable to injury. Apply the hard-easy rule, following tough, challenging sessions with something easier and less intense the next day.



## **Learn A New Activity**

Whether it's a surfing at the beach, horseback riding, a tennis lesson at your local club or signing up for a course of Pilates sessions - pledge to acquire a new activity-related skill this year. The body gets complacent when you always do the same thing, and having adapted to what you normally do, no longer finds it challenging. Giving something new a try will force your brain and body to master new motor patterns. It's absorbing, fun and ultimately more rewarding than more of the same old, same old!