

5 smart ways to Get in Great Shape This Year

Everyone knows the bottom line. Getting plenty of physical activity is a smart move. You are less likely to get a serious disease. You may need fewer medications. You may also perform better at your job or school. And physical activity puts you in a good mood! Here are some ways to get fit.

1. Get into fun aerobics with friends.

Aerobics are activities that make your heart beat faster. For the best health, adults need at least 30-60 minutes a day. How you get those minutes is up to you! Do something you enjoy. You can walk, dance, swim, bike or run. Maybe you can join a sports team. Be active with friends for extra fun and support!

2. Pump those muscles with some weight.

It's never too late to get stronger. People in their 80s and 90s can still build muscles! And you don't have to join a gym. You can get strong with simple equipment and activities at home. Pump homemade hand weights made of water bottles filled with sand or water. Or use your own body weight. You can do push-ups, pull-ups, abdominal crunches and lunges. For more ideas, check out: www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/.

3. Don't forget about flexibility.

Flexibility helps to prevent injury. It makes you feel and look younger. Simple stretches and twists are all you need. You can even do these while watching TV. Your local Parks and Rec department may have classes like yoga, tai chi and Pilates. These are good ways to learn and practice flexibility. Here are some stretches to get you started: www.myeatssmartmovemore.com/StartMovingMore.html.



4. Strengthen the core with balance activities.

Core strengthening is not just a trend! Fitness experts have known for a long time that it is important to have strong and flexible muscles in your belly and back. A strong core helps you stand taller and look better. You will also have less back pain. Balance activities are especially good for your core. For some exercises you can try, go to www.livestrong.com.

5. Make play part of every exercise routine.

If you want to get into great shape, listen to your inner child and focus on play. Throw a Frisbee® or jump rope. Have a dance party – by yourself or with friends. Borrow your neighbor's dog and explore nearby parks and trails. If you have trouble being active alone, sign up with a buddy. Playtime is always more fun with friends!