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## 10 Tips for Fall Fitness

Fall is a super season for shaping up, experts say. Setting goals and making promises on December 31 (New Year's resolution!) over a drink is generally too late. Fall, on the other hand, is a great time to start a fitness program because you will be creating good habits for the holiday season AND the upcoming winter months. Think of September as your "new year."

- 1. Take advantage of the beautiful fall weather.** Fall months can be a great time to exercise outdoors and enjoy cooler temperatures. Walking, hiking, in-line skating, and cycling are all awesome activities for the fall. Discover nearby park trails and take in some new scenery. And remember, it doesn't have to *seem* like exercise to be a great workout. Raking leaves or doing some fall outdoor yard work is a great way to get the heart pumping and burn calories.
- 2. Think outside the box.** Always wanted to learn to tap dance? Attempt to box? Master the jump rope? Many classes at gyms and community centres get started in the fall, so look around and see what intrigues you.
- 3. Be an active TV watcher.** Many people get geared up for fall premieres of their favourite television shows. While you watch, you can walk or run in place, do standing lunges, do tricep dips off the couch, or lift weights. During commercials, do push-ups or sit-ups. In a one-hour show, you probably have close to 20 minutes worth of commercial interruptions.
- 4. Integrate exercise into your life.** Obvious suggestions are to park farther away from your destination; take stairs instead of elevators; take a walk during your lunch break. Here are a few that are less obvious. When spending the afternoon with your kids at their soccer practices, walk around the outside of the practice field instead of reading a book or visiting with another parent. If you feel comfortable enough, warm up and cool down with the kids.
- 5. Rejuvenate yourself.** Fall is the time to rejuvenate body, mind, and spirit. Get a massage after your bike ride or run. Learn to meditate. Take an art class. Make yourself feel good physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
- 6. The 30-day rule.** It takes about four weeks for the body to adapt to lifestyle changes. For this reason, people who give up on their fitness programs tend to do so within the first 30 days. Make a contract with yourself (SIGN it and get it witnessed!) to exercise regularly for a specific period of 30 days (e.g., Sept 1 to Oct 1). Don't think beyond that. After that time, you can then make another contract for an additional 30 days. Keep doing that until you feel as if your behaviour pattern has become somewhat established. When that happens, it will be easier for you to stick with your program.
- 7. Strive for the 3 Cs. Commitment, convenience, and consistency.** First, exercise takes **commitment**. Try not to use "busy" as an excuse. Everyone is busy; that's just part of our lives. Exercising needs planning as does everything you do (meetings, dinners, and getting kids to lessons and practices). Putting exercise onto the calendar is helpful, because putting things off until later can turn into "never." **Convenience** means choosing an activity that you can do at home, a time when you're not likely to be interrupted, or a gym that is close by. Finally, there's **consistency**. It is more effective if you work out for 10 minutes each day than for one hour each month.
- 8. Anticipate and deal with darkness.** The best way to enjoy fall is to exercise outdoors. But it does get darker earlier, and stay dark later in the morning, so be smart and safe. If walking or running outdoors, wear a reflective vest and carry a flashlight. When cycling, make certain to have a light on your helmet or bike. If possible, use a local school track to avoid vehicle traffic altogether.
- 9. Dress in layers.** When exercising outside, layer your clothing. You may feel chilled before your body warms up, but once the blood gets pumping, you'll feel overdressed. Experts suggest that you use three layers of clothing: the inner layer should be a moisture-wicking fabric (often called "DriFit") which draws away or absorbs moisture from your skin so that you are not exercising with wet fabric clinging to you and making you chilled; the second layer should be a warmth layer; and the third layer should be a protective layer (like a windbreaker or rain slicker, depending on the weather). It is important to wear sunglasses because UV protection is important year round. Fall sun can be glaring at certain times of the day.
- 10. Discover what motivates you.** It is important to first discover what your individual goals are (i.e. strengthening, preparing for a race event, losing weight). Choose an activity you'll enjoy doing and will be likely to keep up, whether it's walking or hiking with a friend, working with a trainer or taking part in a "boot camp" class. Creating a **specific** challenge for yourself will help motivate you. It will help you to know when you're doing a good job, and when you're not. Anything worth having takes work.

Something that you can do three times a week for 10 minutes and be great at doesn't exist.  
If it were that easy to be great, everybody would be great.