

FIT FACTS FOR BUSY BODIES

THE FITNESS “HABIT”

**By
Trish Schwartz**

QUESTION:

They say it takes 20 days to get into a habit. I’ve tried diets and exercise programs for at least that long, at one time, and can't seem to stick with it. What can I do to get in the “fitness” habit?

ANSWER:

I have been a fitness professional for over 20 years. The 20-day habit does NOT apply to fitness. It takes at least six weeks for the body to get over the “hump” (period of time where body is adapting to the new stresses of exercise and reaching a more comfortable level of exertion). In addition, it takes weeks for a new diet to clean out a sluggish body and minimize the effects of excessive calories, salt and sugar.

The amount of adjustment time it takes depends on the fitness level of the person. The more de-conditioned and internally toxic a person is, the longer it will take to reach a more comfortable feeling with fitness. However, the awareness of changes going on in the body are much more obvious. This realization can motivate the unfit person to continue to seek fitness, knowing how good they will feel when they reach a certain level.

Much of the problem with staying with a new fitness program is that many individuals try to change their bad habits in too drastic of a manner. The body has a difficult time adjusting because the changes are too invasive and uncomfortable. Let’s face it, we, as humans, are pleasure seekers. Going from being a couch potato and eating a heavy, high-calorie diet of fatty, salt and sugar-laden foods to a lighter, cleansing diet, plus physical exercise, takes some getting use to. Your body may experience many uncomfortable transitions on the road to better health.

However, taking on a fitness lifestyle does not need to be uncomfortable or invasive. It should be comfortable, refreshing and energizing. Somewhere, during the process of changing your bad habits and getting more fit, you will be enlightened to the pleasurable feeling of having a clean, lighter, energetic and functional body. The key is to make gradual, comfortable and doable changes. This requires time and patience.

The changes made, in an effort to get more fit, should be realistic. In other words, you don’t go out and run five times a week if you do not plan to continue that exercise regimen. You do not give up pizza and ice cream if those are two of your favorite foods.

What you do is learn how to eat for good health as well as pleasure. Find an exercise program that feels good to your body and has an element of interest, fun and empowerment to it. There are lots of options. You need to experiment and find out what works for you, as an individual.

For those who wish to be independent in their fitness program, getting some initial guidance from a good fitness trainer is a wise investment. The results depend on your efforts and consistency. For those who need more structure, a wellness and weight loss program that involves “real” food that you choose, as well as an exercise program that fits into your schedule, is the way to go. Being part of a structured, guided, monitored, but somewhat independent program, is ideal for those who need constant help and feedback.

The best type of program is one that teaches you how to get into a fitness lifestyle that works for you. Your time schedule, your likes and dislikes with food and exercise, your “problem” areas that tend to sabotage your fitness efforts and your physical status (injuries, aches and pains, abilities, etc.) should all be taken into consideration when helping you change to a fitness lifestyle.

The bottom line is, it takes time to change your bad habits to good habits, in fitness. You need to realize that you don’t give up food you love to eat. You figure out an appropriate way to incorporate them into your diet. You do not beat your body up with hard, uncomfortable exercise that you dread long before you ever get to the gym. You find movement that feels good to you, whether it is walking, jogging, hiking, biking, weight training, Yoga, Pilates, Karate, or sports (tennis, racquetball, basketball, etc.) or a combination of several types of exercises.

Getting your body “well” is another important ingredient to fitness success. Losing weight is much easier when the body (physiologically) is optimally functioning. Keeping weight off is much easier with a vital and efficient digestive and metabolic system. Achieving higher energy levels and less sickness is just as important as losing weight.

So, stop going on diets that are far from what you intend to continue to do. Stop taking on exercise programs that are tedious and uncomfortable to your body. Get into a “lifestyle” of fitness that becomes a permanent part of your life.