

Bodies of Knowledge

Local fitness experts share tips on making the most of your workout regimen.

1. On Getting Yourself Motivated

First, list all the reasons why you might want to exercise: reduced risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and so on. Then, to make it easier to succeed, start with small goals—like taking a walk around the block during lunch hour—especially if you're sedentary. Let friends and family know about your plans so it'll be harder to back out. Also, it helps to have someone to exercise with. You might need to push hard for the first few weeks before it becomes a part of your routine and you feel the benefits.

Dr. Eric Endlich

Boston-based sport and exercise psychologist

2. On Eating Before Working Out

You have a car, you put gas in it, it goes. You have a body, you put food in it, it goes a lot better. Food is fuel, and it's important to fill up before you work out. I generally recommend eating 100 to 200 calories in the hour before exercising. Try bananas, graham crackers with peanut butter, bagels, fruit—carbohydrates that are simple to digest. Even coffee enhances energy, but make it a latte so that it has a little more fuel, or have a granola bar with it. And you'll learn what works best through trial and error: Some people find oranges and yogurt too acidic, for instance, while others love them.

Nancy Clark

Newton author of Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook and registered dietitian

3. On Zapping Weight from Just the Butt (or Belly...or Thighs)

Regardless of all these crazy fads we hear about, there is no such thing as spot reduction. There is no magic pill! People get so confused by all diets out there, and the "four minutes a day" workouts. We just tell them "K.I.S.S.—Keep It Simple, Stupid." If you stay true to a basic approach to fitness, and to clean, real food (not all this silly diet food) and clean, pure water, you'll get results. That's how you change: from the inside out.

Shereen Berlin

Certified trainer at Gstarfit in Needham

4. On Why You Really Do Need to Replace Those Beat-up Running Shoes

Most last for 300 to 500 miles, which is about three to six months of regular exercise. Many people look at the rubber sole the way they do a tire—if it's not bald, it's still good—but it's not like that. The rubber will last forever. It's the midsole, in the middle layer of the shoe, that you need to worry about: It eventually hardens and fails to give support. Keep track of your mileage, or buy two pairs of shoes and switch back and forth from week to week. At some point you'll notice that one is beginning to feel better—so you'll know the other one's worn out.

Shane Downey

National product training supervisor for Boston-based New Balance

5. On the Benefits of a Good Rubdown

Massage therapy isn't just for pro athletes—it also helps people who are training for a race, or even for personal wellness. Often muscles don't have the ability to recover on their own. They need assistance to get the blood moving. Working at a desk all day, or the way you sit on the couch to watch TV—these things can build up repetitive stresses. You do stuff to your body all the time, and you should take care to keep it running optimally.

Drew Freedman

Massage therapist and owner of Boston Bodyworker

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