

ACSM Information On...

Investing in a Personal Trainer



A qualified personal trainer can help you safely start and maintain an effective exercise program. A personal trainer will understand your fitness goals and help you achieve them. Personal trainers can be a great source of motivation and accountability, as well as a resource for the latest objective health and fitness information. A personal trainer can also help you with strategies to seamlessly incorporate exercise into your schedule and teach you how to make the most out of your time in the gym. Making the right choice in a fitness professional is an important investment to your health, wellness and life.

A Complete Physical Activity Program

A well-rounded physical activity program includes aerobic exercise and strength training exercise, but not necessarily in the same session. This blend helps maintain or improve cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness and overall health and function. The perfect exercise program is individualized and promotes enjoyment and retention.

To stay healthy, adults need 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity weekly, or 75-150 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity (or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity). Additionally, women and men are encouraged to do muscle-strengthening exercises that involve all the major muscle groups at a moderate or greater intensity on two or more days a week. Some examples of aerobic exercises are:

- Walking
- Running
- Stair climbing
- Cycling
- Rowing
- Cross country skiing
- Swimming

Locating a Personal Trainer

Please note that the title “personal trainer” does not guarantee that a person is qualified. Currently, there is no national standard or minimum requirement for an individual to use the title “personal trainer.” Working with an under qualified trainer could compromise your safety. It is important to have knowledge of what to look for when seeking a personal trainer who is educated, qualified and the right fit for you!

Begin by asking about personal trainers at your local health club or fitness facility. Many have in-house personal trainers you can hire. Inquire whether your current health club provides a free fitness assessment with a personal trainer, trial training session or both to evaluate all of the following questions.

Certification and Education Questions

- Does the personal trainer hold a degree from an accredited college or university in exercise science, kinesiology, exercise physiology, physical education or a related health-and-fitness field? The trainer should have a foundational understanding in anatomy/physiology, program design and risk assessment to educate clients to an informed decision.
- Does the personal trainer have a certification from a nationally recognized organization? Check to make sure the certification is from a credible and reputable organization. USREPS is a great resource.
- What continuing education is required to maintain the certification?
- Does the personal trainer have any advanced training or credentials?
- Is the personal trainer certified in first aid and CPR?
- Does the personal trainer have liability insurance?

Finding the Right Personal Trainer for You: Questions to Consider

- Would you prefer a male or female trainer?
- Do you like the trainer’s demeanor? Will they be a good fit for your personality and your fitness goals?
- Is the personal trainer open to answering your questions? Do they ask insightful questions about your exercise preferences, background, etc.?
- Does the personal trainer communicate effectively and explain information in a way that is easy to understand?
- Will the personal trainer motivate you to exercise and make you want to continue your program?
- Is the personal trainer sensitive to your needs?
- Do you feel comfortable with the personal trainer?

Experience Questions to Ask

- How much experience does the personal trainer have?
- What types of clients do they regularly work with?
- Can they provide you with any references?
- If you have any special physical needs (such as with special equipment, injury, illness or medication), does the personal trainer have the skills and experience to accommodate?

Fees Questions to Ask

- What does the personal trainer charge?
- What services are included in the price?
- Is there an additional gym membership fee?
- Are there short-term package or long-term package prices?
- How long is each session?
- Does the trainer require you to sign a contract for long-term training?

Tips: The fees personal trainers charge may vary according to qualifications, experience, location, length of session and specialization of the workout. Typically, a personal trainer will charge \$20 to \$100 an hour. Some personal trainers will offer reduced hourly rates for long-term packages or prepaid sessions. Avoid signing any type of long-term contract with a personal trainer.

Scheduling, Cancellation Policies & Business Practices

- Is the trainer available to meet your schedule?
- What is the personal trainer's cancellation policy?
- Will you be charged if you do not cancel within a certain time frame?
- Ask the personal trainer to provide you with a written copy of all policies on billing, scheduling and cancellations.

What You Should Expect During Your First Session

The personal trainer should be able to provide information regarding potential risks associated with exercise. The personal trainer should be able to respond to any reasonable and

foreseeable emergency situation that threatens the safety of a client. Here are some safety points the personal trainer should do:

- Prior to beginning an exercise program, the personal trainer should ask you specific questions about medical conditions, medications currently being taken, previous injuries and surgery as it relates to exercise and aches and pains.
- The personal trainer should offer a pre-activity screening and fitness evaluation that is appropriate for the activity you wish to perform.
- The personal trainer should instruct you concerning the equipment use, safety aspects of all exercises and physiological changes that are expected.
- The personal trainer should assist you in developing realistic goals for your exercise program.
- The personal trainer should provide fitness assessments related to the specific exercise program you wish to complete.

Important Points to Remember Before Hiring a Personal Trainer

Use the points addressed in this brochure as your checklist in finding the best possible personal trainer for you. Before hiring the personal trainer, make sure all of your questions have been sufficiently answered. This will help you avoid making a wrong decision, which may end up costing you money. Selecting a professional and qualified personal trainer is a sound investment for your health. Take the time to do this right.

Staying Active Pays Off!

Those who are physically active tend to live longer, healthier lives. Research shows that moderate physical activity—such as 30 minutes a day of brisk walking—significantly contributes to a longer life. Even a person with health risk factors like high blood pressure, depression, diabetes or a smoking habit can gain real benefits from incorporating regular physical activity into their daily life.

As many dieters have found, exercise can also help you achieve weight loss goals. What's more, regular exercise can help lower blood pressure, control blood sugar, improve cholesterol levels and build stronger, denser bones. Exercise helps improve your mental well-being too.

A Complete Physical Activity Program

Regular physical activity provides many health benefits. While it's not required, working with an exercise professional can help you reach your fitness goals, tailor exercises to your abilities and most importantly, minimize your risk of injury. You should expect the exercise professional to ask you to fill out an exercise pre-participation health screening. This form will ask if you exercise regularly and if you have any health concerns that should prompt you to see your healthcare provider before getting started. The following precautions will help you safely participate in exercise programs:

If you DO NOT exercise regularly:

If you have not been diagnosed by a doctor with, AND do not have signs or symptoms of cardiovascular, metabolic or kidney disease, THEN you can start right away with light to moderate intensity exercise. You can gradually build up to vigorous exercise if you stay free of any symptoms of health problems.

If you have ever been diagnosed by a doctor, with OR have signs/symptoms of cardiovascular, metabolic or kidney disease, THEN it is recommended to seek medical clearance before beginning an exercise program. Once you get medical clearance, you should start with light to moderate intensity. You can gradually build up to vigorous exercise if you stay free of any symptoms of health problems.

If you DO exercise regularly:

If you have not been diagnosed with, AND do not have signs or symptoms of cardiovascular, metabolic, or kidney disease, you can continue with moderate exercise or gradually build to vigorous exercise intensity.

If you have been diagnosed with cardiovascular, metabolic, or kidney disease AND do not have any sign/symptoms of health problems, then you can continue exercising at a moderate intensity. If you received medical clearance within the last 12 months AND your symptoms have not changed, then can continue with moderate exercise or gradually build to vigorous exercise intensity.

If at any time you develop a sign or symptom of cardiovascular, metabolic or kidney disease, discontinue exercise and seek a doctor's clearance right away. Then, after getting medical clearance, you may continue your moderate intensity exercise program and gradually progress your effort.

Getting Started with an Exercise Program

A well-rounded exercise program includes aerobic, strength training exercises, but not necessarily in the same session. This blend helps maintain or improve overall health and function. So, it is important to choose exercises you enjoy and can fit into your schedule.

Not all exercise programs are suitable for everyone. Activities should be carried out at an effort level that is comfortable for you. You should stop participation in any exercise activity that causes pain. In such event, you should consult with your health care professional immediately.

ACSM recommends you accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (working hard enough to break a sweat, but still able to carry on a conversation) most days per week, or 20 minutes of more vigorous activity three days per week. Combinations of moderate- and vigorous-intensity activity can be performed to meet this recommendation.

Examples of typical aerobic exercises are: walking, running, stair climbing, cycling, rowing, cross country skiing and swimming. Examples of common strength training exercises are: weight machines, free weights and resistance bands. Flexibility exercises can include: stretches of muscles around different joints and yoga.

Rights and Permissions

ACSM grants permission to reproduce this brochure if it is reproduced in its entirety without alteration. The text may be reproduced in another publication if it is used in its entirety without alteration and the following statement is added: Reprinted with permission of the American College of Sports Medicine.

Copyright © 2019 American College of Sports Medicine. This brochure was created by Michael Bracko, Ed.D., and edited by Tony P. Nuñez, PhD, and Tony Maloney, ACSM-EP, and is a product of ACSM's Consumer Outreach Committee. Visit ACSM online at www.acsm.org.