

Jenny MacLean's Fitness Column #7

✘ *Fitness and health for beginners*

Are you a complete beginner to exercise or thinking about returning to fitness, after a long break?

It can be a daunting prospect, but getting started, maintaining momentum and achieving your aspirations are all within your reach.

First, think about what's motivating you. The more powerful the motive for exercising, the easier it is to keep progressing. Set yourself some definite goals, write them down and then put them on the wall, fridge door, or somewhere else visible. It's also helpful to enlist support from family, friends or a professional fitness trainer. They'll remind you of your goals and be your personal cheerleaders.

Planning time available is key too. Decide in advance how much time you're prepared to commit to getting fit. A trainer can help you identify opportunities for exercise, which you might not have been aware of.

Here are some questions to ask yourself, to help choose your exercise plan:

- which activities do you like? And which do you dislike?
- are there any activities you've always wanted to try, but have never had the chance?
- would you prefer to exercise indoors or outside?
- are there any activities you'd like to do in a class?

Whatever you choose, ensure you include activities which make you out of breath, to get fitter and lose weight. Also include time in your fitness plan for resistance and weights work, as this builds muscle and strength, as well as boosting your metabolism.

If your goals include losing weight, you'll need to make changes to your diet too. Long-term, permanent changes towards healthier eating patterns are best. They have far more positive impact on your waistline and health for life than short term restrictive diets.

Finally, always monitor your results and remember to celebrate all your successes!

This is the seventh of Jenny's fitness columns for The Edinburgh Reporter. We hope it helps you to achieve your fitness goals!

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