



ACSM Information On...

Selecting and Effectively Using 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. Trainers can be a great source of motivation and encouragement, as well as a resource for the latest objective health and fitness information. A trainer can also help you fit exercise into your schedule and teach you how to make the most out of your time in the gym.

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. Regular physical activity will provide more health benefits than sporadic, high intensity workouts, so choose exercises you are likely to enjoy and that you can incorporate into your schedule.

ACSM's physical activity recommendations for healthy adults, updated in 2011, recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (working hard enough to break a sweat, but still able to carry on a conversation) five 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
- Swimming.

In addition, strength training should be performed a minimum of two days each week, with 8-12 repetitions of 8-10 different exercises that target all major muscle groups. This type of training can be accomplished using body weight, resistance bands, free weights, medicine balls or weight machines.

The title "personal trainer" does not guarantee that a person is qualified. Currently, there is no national standard or minimum requirement for personal trainers. Working with an under-qualified trainer could jeopardize your safety. It is important to have the knowledge of what to look for when seeking a personal trainer that is educated, qualified a right fit for you!

LOCATING A PERSONAL TRAINER

Begin by asking about personal trainers at your local health club or fitness facility. Many have in-house personal trainers you can use. Consult ACSM or another credentialing organization to ask about the appropriate qualifications for personal trainers.

CERTIFICATION AND EDUCATION

- Does the personal trainer hold a four-year degree from an accredited university in exercise science, kinesiology, exercise physiology, physical education or a related health-and-fitness field?
- Does the personal trainer have additional training and a certification by a nationally recognized organization?

- What continuing education is required to maintain the certification?
- Is the trainer certified in first aid and CPR?
- Does the trainer have liability insurance?

All certifications should be obtained from a nationally recognized organization and based on job-related performance criteria, which has been validated by scientific research in the field. Many certifying organizations do not comply with industry standards, so it is important to ask about the trainer's educational background and professional certifications. Check to make sure the certification is from a credible and reputable organization.

FINDING A PERSONAL TRAINER

- Would you prefer a male or female trainer?
- Do you like the trainer's personality? Will he or she be a good fit for your personality and your fitness goals?
- Is the trainer friendly and open to answering questions?
- Does the trainer communicate well and explain exercises in a way that is easy to understand?
- Will the trainer motivate you to exercise

and make you want to continue your program?

- Is the trainer sensitive to your needs?
- Are you comfortable with the trainer?

EXPERIENCE AND REFERENCES

- How long has he or she been a personal trainer?
- What types of clients does he or she regularly work with?
- Can he or she provide you with an updated resume and references?
- The trainer should have more education and experience than just having been a weightlifter, a body-builder or active in fitness.

FEES

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

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 trainers will offer reduced hourly rates for long-term packages or prepaid sessions.

SAFETY AND PRE-ACTIVITY SCREENING

The trainer should be able to provide information regarding potential risks associated with exercise. The trainer should be able to respond to any reasonable and foreseeable emergency situation that threatens the safety of a client.

- The trainer should ask specific questions, before the exercise program begins, about medical conditions, medications currently being taken, previous injuries and surgery as it relates to exercise, and aches and pains.
- Every client should be screened before training to assess whether he or she has medical conditions or risk factors that should be addressed by a physician.
- Every client should be offered a pre-

activity screening and fitness evaluation that is appropriate for the activity he or she will perform.

- The trainer should instruct you concerning the equipment use, safety aspects of the exercise, and physiological changes that are expected.
- The trainer should assist you in developing realistic goals for the exercise program.
- The trainer should provide fitness assessments related to the specific exercise program to be performed.
- Periodic assessments should be done to determine your progress with the program.

SCHEDULING, CANCELLATION POLICIES & BUSINESS PRACTICES

- Is the trainer available to meet your schedule?
- What is the cancellation policy?
- Will you be charged if you do not cancel within a certain time frame?

Ask the trainer to provide you with a written copy of all policies on contracts, billing, scheduling and cancellations. Make sure the trainer has a good reputation, proper education and certification(s) and is well-respected by other trainers and clients. The trainer should conform to all relevant laws, regulations and published standards, including but not limited to United States federal laws (ADA and OSHA) and local government laws and regulations.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Ask questions to see if a trainer can meet your needs regarding modification of equipment and programs.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

Ask questions so that you will have accurate information when making a decision. It can 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.

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 longevity. Even a person with risk factors like high blood pressure, diabetes or even a smoking habit can gain real benefits from incorporating regular physical activity into their daily life.

As many dieters have found, exercise can help you stay on a diet and lose weight. What's more – regular exercise can help lower blood pressure, control blood sugar, improve cholesterol levels and build stronger, denser bones.

THE FIRST STEP

Before you begin an exercise program, take a fitness test, or substantially increase your level of activity, make sure to answer the following questions. This physical activity readiness questionnaire (PAR-Q) will help determine if you're ready to begin an exercise routine or program.

- Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition or that you should participate in physical activity only as recommended by a doctor?
- Do you feel pain in your chest during physical activity?
- In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?
- Do you lose your balance from dizziness? Do you ever lose consciousness?
- Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?
- Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs for your blood pressure or a heart condition?
- Do you know of any reason you should not participate in physical activity?

If you answered yes to one or more questions, if you are over 40 years of age and have recently been inactive, or if you are concerned about your health, consult a physician before taking a fitness test or substantially increasing your physical activity. If you answered no to each question, then it's likely that you can safely begin exercising.

PRIOR TO EXERCISE

Prior to beginning any exercise program, including the activities depicted in this brochure, individuals should seek medical evaluation and clearance to engage in activity. Not all exercise programs are suitable for everyone, and some programs may result in injury. Activities should be carried out at a pace that is comfortable for the user. Users should discontinue participation in any exercise activity that causes pain or discomfort. In such event, medical consultation should be immediately obtained.



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