



BUILDING YOUR OWN HOME GYM

AS THE FITNESS AND WELLNESS CRAZE continues to sweep across North America, we continue to see gyms opening up in cities and towns throughout the country. Depending on your schedule, however, joining a gym might not be right for you.

As our days become more and more filled with events, obligations, children and work, there is less time left to do the things we need to do for ourselves. The mere thought of working or taking care of the kids all day, then getting in the car to drive to the gym at six or seven, mustering up the energy to actually have a decent workout and finally arriving home at eight or nine at night might be a little too much for some people.

So what are your alternative options? Well, because of the hectic schedules so many of us face in our go-go-go society, there has been an increasing demand for home gyms. Contrary to popular belief,

Ready to commit yourself to finally getting off the couch when you're at home? Then building your own home gym may be exactly what you need to shed those few extra pounds... and it might just be easier than you think!

By ADAM THEODOROU

building your home gym can be easier and less costly than you think.

The first and most important rule when building your home gym is to purchase equipment that you actually need and will use. Over the years, there have been a plethora of all-in-one machines on the market, yet they usually cost too much and are rarely used. Everybody has had a piece of equipment that ends up collecting dust or becoming one heck of a clothing rack. They key is in knowing which machines are necessities and which are not.

GET YOUR HEART PUMPING

To begin, every home gym needs some sort of cardiovascular machine. This can be a treadmill, an elliptical, a stepper, a stationary bike, etc. Regardless of chosen activity, your body knows it's in motion and reacts to the level of output you are generating with an increased heart rate.

As long as you use a machine that boosts your heart rate to the desired level, a beneficial workout will be achieved.

There are other factors you can consider when choosing a good cardio machine, however. If you're someone who suffers from weak knees, sore hips or a bad back, equipment that generates a low amount of impact (e.g., the elliptical or the stepper) is a good choice. These machines were designed to decrease impact (the stress an activity puts on your joints) while still raising your heart rate.

When looking at the cost of various equipment, it's a good idea to shop around to do some price comparisons. While researching different products, it's important to keep in mind that a seemingly good deal might not be the best value for your dollar in the long run. The better quality machine you buy, the longer it will last with the least amount of problems. I have found that people who upgrade to a semi-commercial line product end up paying a little more at the beginning, but have far fewer headaches in the long run. You get more bang for your buck!

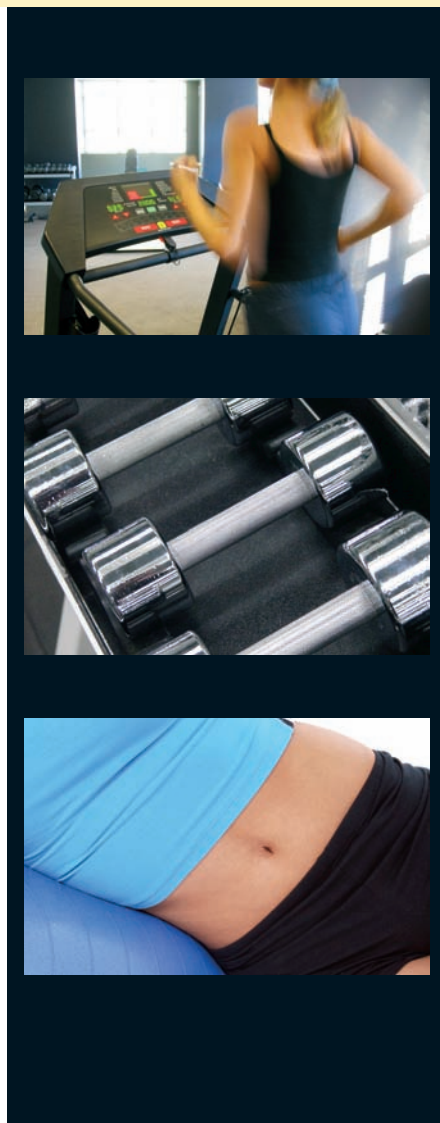
A WEIGHTY CHALLENGE

The second thing we need to examine is your weights. As good as cardio is for promoting the ability to burn fat and shake off excess pounds, weight bearing exercise is the only way to increase your lean body mass (LBM).

Your lean body mass is composed of muscles, body fluid, connective tissues and bones. It is also directly responsible for the amount of calories you can burn within a given period. For example, a person who has a LBM of 150lbs burns far more calories doing the exact same activity in the same amount of time as someone who has a LBM of 100lbs. When we raise our LBM by doing weights, we make our bodies more efficient and better calorie burners.

When purchasing weights, you will need to buy enough to safely challenge yourself and then some. Having just a little more than you are comfortable lifting in your home gym provides inspiration to continually push yourself towards improvement.

Your body has a remarkable ability to adapt to demands that are placed on it. When you start working out, a 15lb dumbbell might seem heavy at first. If you stick with a program for a couple months of consistent workouts, you'll find that 15lbs doesn't feel quite as heavy. Therefore, you will eventually need to increase the amount of mass you're working with. This can be achieved by incrementally adding weight to your dumbbells. Working out



with even the most basic set should be more than sufficient to facilitate a response in your muscles. You will also need an adjustable utility bench to perform most of your exercises. These can be found in all fitness stores and are relatively inexpensive.

HIT THE MAT & HAVE A BALL

The third and final component of your home gym should be a floor mat and a stability ball. Much emphasis is put on core strengthening today, and for good reason! If everybody did abdominal and lower back exercises on a regular basis, most back problems would cease to exist. Many of us suffer from chronic discomfort in the lower or upper back due to weak core muscles. These are the muscles that are responsible for keeping our bodies erect and giving us proper posture. Without strengthening these, we run in to all sorts of problems. Both the floor mat and stability ball open the door to hundreds of different exercises that help strengthen core muscles.

Now that you are set up and ready to start working out in the comfort of your own home, just one problem remains: what to do and how to do it. If you're someone who is yet to seek professional input, this is the perfect time to do it. It's always a good idea to hire a professional to come to your home to design a program

specific to your needs and equipment. Not only will this save you time in getting the results you want, it will also give you a better grasp on what to do and how much to do in order to avoid injuries. Most injuries occur in executing an exercise incorrectly as opposed to working with too much weight. Your body will also respond better to exercising correctly and thus isolating targeted areas. You wouldn't get behind the wheel of a car without driving lessons, so why would you try to work out without learning what to do first?

Putting together your home gym can save you time and money. By investing just a little effort in finding the proper equipment outlined in this article, you will already be on your way to getting on the health and wellness train...all in the comfort of your own home. Remember to always start slow, ease into any program and good luck as you begin your journey towards a happier and healthier lifestyle! ©

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