

NO MORE EXCUSES

Whether you're a fitness fanatic or a couch potato, every now and then there's bound to be a reason you can't exercise. But there's a big difference between reasons and excuses. We asked some experts how to combat the most common excuses

By Maya Zahran

1 I'M NOT A MORNING PERSON; IT'S TOO HARD TO GET OUT OF BED

Sorry, but you just can't ignore the findings of endless research confirming exercise is best done in the morning. Michael Cunico, NSW fitness manager for Fitness First health clubs, believes that your body will eventually get used to what you demand of it. "I find that once people give it an opportunity and allow their body to adjust their internal clock, it's not a drama."

The reality is that people who leave training until later in the day can easily use time and other factors as an excuse. Blake Worrall-Thompson, a personal trainer and owner of the Sydney-based fitness

company Raw Solutions, says that making training in the morning a habit is a necessity. "Absolutely no-one feels like getting up at 5am when they first start, but within the space of three to four weeks, they've created a new habit and it's not an issue anymore."

2 I'M TOO OLD TO EXERCISE

For Christine Atkins, fitness specialist and Australian Exercise Professional of the Year 2009, this is a familiar excuse. She has mentored people training to compete in the World Masters – games for the over-35s – and knows that age is no barrier.


"You're not too old. I took people into the World Masters, people who have

never competed before in their life," she says. "These people are coming from never having been on a podium, to receiving a medal for achieving extraordinary results."

It doesn't mean everyone should strive to compete on a professional level – but it's achievable if you want it.

3 I'M TOO TIRED AND DON'T HAVE TIME

Everyone has the time, whether you split your 40-minute work-out into four ten-minute sessions throughout the day, or get it done in one hit. "If you want longevity in your life, you need to make health a priority. Everyone can make the time," says Worrall-Thompson.



“Exercising in public can be intimidating ... But within two to three weeks you will start to become more comfortable”

4 MY EXERCISE PARTNER IS AWAY THIS WEEK AND I FIND IT HARD TO MOTIVATE MYSELF

Although it helps to share your goals with someone else, it's important to take ownership of your routine. “Having a buddy does help, particularly if you struggle with that intrinsic motivation,” says Cunico. “However, relying on someone else to try to achieve the goals you have is a dangerous thing.”

5 THE WEATHER IS OUT OF CONTROL AND I CAN'T BE BOTHERED

Rain, hail or shine, there's an exercise routine available for you. Try to squeeze in a minimum of 30 minutes a day – even if it comes down to muscle-strengthening exercises in the comfort of your own home.

Worrall-Thompson suggests that if you want to participate in outdoor training, start during summer and get into the habit well before the cooler months kick in. “You shouldn't really start trying to run at 6am on a cold winter morning – it's too hard to get started that way,” he says.

6 GYMS ARE INTIMIDATING

New experiences can be intimidating. But try seeing it as an opportunity to socialise with people who share similar goals to you. “The idea that everyone in the gym is fit and healthy is misleading,” says Cunico. “If someone's thinking about it, I can guarantee other people in the club are thinking the same thing.” So go easy – try group classes first. The instructor will keep an eye on technique and form, which will help until you build up confidence.

7 GYM MEMBERSHIPS ARE EXPENSIVE

Although the gym might seem like the only option, there are many outdoor group exercises you can get involved in. It can be as simple as going for a run or taking your dog for a walk. There are also social sports such as tennis or golf.

Another inexpensive option is group personal training sessions. Recruit a couple of friends who share similar fitness goals and the session won't cost you more than the price of coffees for a week.

8 I HATE EXERCISING - IT'S NOT FUN

The research says it all – people who exercise are

happier and live longer than those who lead sedentary lives. Worrall-Thompson says it's best to find a hobby or team sport that will keep you going. “One of my clients has taken up dancing twice a week and burns up to 700 calories (2929kJ) in one session. It's great considering she doesn't even realise she's doing a high-intensity work-out.”

9 I'VE ALREADY TRIED EXERCISING AND I DIDN'T EVEN LOSE WEIGHT

It's important to be clear about your goals. Are you trying to lose weight or get fit? Yes, there is a difference. If your goal is to improve your health, that doesn't necessarily relate to weight loss.

According to Cunico, while you'll definitely reap benefits from a 20-minute walk every morning, you won't necessarily generate weight loss. To lose weight you should incorporate resistance training. He suggests investing time and money in a personal trainer at the start, to provide the direction you need. “Otherwise, with no routine, no method, no process, you're going to find that motivation will drop and you'll eventually fall back into your old habits,” he says.

Atkins agrees, and says that exercise programmes need to be unique to each individual depending on their goals. “It's all in the approach ... you find people who work out a little, eat a bit better and make those small changes,” she says. “They convert fat into muscle and they will lose the weight better than those who dive into it by exercising excessively and not eating at all.”

10 I DON'T LIKE EXERCISING IN PUBLIC - I LOOK LIKE A FOOL

Odds are you don't look foolish and no-one's taking any notice anyway. Try focusing on the social benefits, which will boost your performance and increase your motivation. “Exercising in public can be quite intimidating, but the hardest thing is getting started,” says Worrall-Thompson. “Within a matter of two to three weeks you will start to become more comfortable.”

11 I FEEL UNWELL AFTER I EXERCISE

This shouldn't be the case, but if it is, it's likely you're exercising without fuel. “It may come down to what happens before you actually start exercising,” says Cunico. “If you get up to have a work-out in the morning and haven't eaten anything, then you're probably going to feel a bit light-headed after.”

Nutrition is a big part of exercise. Remember to eat something before your work-out and drink plenty of water during and after. ●