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## Develop a safe exercise program

An exercise program, if conducted properly, will increase your energy level, reduce stress, help you fight disease and allow you a better night's sleep. Consider these suggestions from the National Safety Council to help you develop a safe exercise program.

- Begin your program by evaluating your current fitness level.
- If you are under the age of 35, in good health and are relatively active, it may be fairly safe to embark on an exercise program on your own. If you are over 35 or a smoker you may want to consult a physician before starting a program.
- Gradually ease into your regimen, particularly if you have not exercised on a regular basis for some time. Set reasonable goals and monitor your progress—being careful not to do too much too soon. Listen to your body; it will tell you if you are over-extending yourself.
- A well-rounded workout should include exercises that address five fitness areas: muscle strength, muscle endurance, flexibility, weight control and cardiovascular endurance.
- Weight lifting and other resistance exercises help to build muscle strength. Stretching exercises increase flexibility. And aerobic exercises such as dancing, jogging or swimming, will develop muscle and cardiovascular endurance as well as aid weight loss.
- Always begin your workout with a warm up and end with a cool down.

Taking time for exercise is a smart investment in a healthy body and a healthy mind!

### Are You In "Safety Shape"?

Safety on the aerobics floor is an important topic, one your body will appreciate.

The National Safety Council offers the following suggestions to keep your body in "safety shape."

- Not all instructors are certified to teach. The acronyms IDEA, AFAA and ACSM verify that an aerobics instructor has completed exercise and aerobics courses and has passed an exam. Find out if your health club hires instructors with these credentials.

- Look at the flooring. Veneer flooring is least desirable, and it's hard to move around on carpeting. Wood flooring with spring to it is best. Be sure the surface isn't slippery since you can fall easily.
- Footwear is key. A dedicated aerobics participant could easily replace shoes every two or three months. A good shoe needs proper heel and mid-foot support. Otherwise, you could develop painful "shin splints," sprain your ankle or twist a foot. You need an aerobics shoe just as you would a tennis shoe or a running shoe. When you run, for instance, your foot lands "heel, toe," But in aerobics, your foot lands "toe, heel." So the support is different, and, as a result, the width of the sole needs to be appropriate for the activity.