

## Move Now or Die Early

No one can argue the value of exercise. Most parents will be the first to send the kids to the yard to wear off some steam. It's unfortunate that these same parents, so willing to get up at 6 am to get the child to hockey practice, are often unwilling to apply the same principles of health to their own lives. There are a million excuses for the lack of activity in the adult life. Unfortunately, excuses are like garbage: everyone has some and it all stinks! Excuses and procrastination are the death of active living. Adults need to be deliberate and proactive when the calendar comes out. When scheduling all the family commitments, no time will magically appear for fitness for the organizer. It must be planned.

I've gone over the need for exercise many times, but I feel the benefits cannot be overemphasized. Following is a list of a few of the many health benefits you can reap from a regular fitness program:

- Improved sleeping patterns
- Improved blood profile
- Increase in bone density
- Increased life expectancy
- Improved cardiovascular health
- Decrease in life-threatening conditions, such as diabetes, insulin resistance and heart disease
- Increased muscle strength
- Decreased blood pressure
- Improved psychological health
- Increase in mobility and flexibility
- Better self image
- Increase in libido
- Lower body fat levels (including heart threatening abdominal fat)

Often the whole prospect of 'fitness' is daunting for many. It doesn't have to be a complicated, expensive or time-consuming affair. Many people feel they need to join expensive health clubs or invest in costly fitness equipment for the home. While these are options, the beginner doesn't need to spend more money than what a good pair of shoes cost. Active living is actually just a choice to bring more activity into your life. I'm probably the extreme case of a fitness zealot, but not everyone has to be as religious about fitness pursuits. It depends on a person's goals as to how frenzied their workout pace will be. Someone starting out may try to incorporate a brisk evening walk into his or her life at first. This may develop into a walk/jog or progress to a run. Maybe it will be a family bike ride or skating outing a few times weekly. If you are to be more serious about actual increases in cardiovascular and muscular fitness, the intensity must be increased from the initial 'get off the couch' phase, but let's not put the cart before the horse. If you're not convinced that you will feel better from investing in yourself, start with a small investment of time and energy. Make sure your energy output is sufficient to get your heart pumping and a little sweat going. Start off fairly slowly to avoid too

much muscle soreness and gradually increase intensity. Be honest with yourself and ask if you think you feel any of the benefits; chances are, you probably will. The key is also to find something that you enjoy doing. Running, swimming, weight training or the myriad of other fitness activities are not a one size fits all. You need to find what you enjoy and think you can stick with.

Of course there are those few that literally hate all forms of exercise they've tried. They simply don't like to sweat. Considering the dire health consequences of not being active, these people need to force themselves to pick the lesser of the evils and find something they can stomach and just 'do it!' Avoiding exercise is like telling a child who hates to read or eat vegetables that they don't have to do it. They cannot become a healthy adult without the chance to nourish their mind and body. Our bodies were meant to move. What we don't use we lose. This can be in the form of loss of muscle mass at a rate of 12% of muscle strength and 6% of muscle mass with each passing decade after the age of 50. Remarkably, the body can actually regain up to one third of muscle strength and mass after participating in an exercise program for only a couple of months.

So this is my challenge to you: Are you practicing what you are preaching to the children in your life? Are you getting the exercise you need to be healthy? Are you at a loss of where to begin or what to do? If so, as a personal trainer, it's my job to get people moving in the right direction.

Shawna Kaminski

Shawna is a long time personal trainer and teacher with many academic and athletic achievements to her credit. She can help you develop the program you need.

Check out how she's helping many with their fitness goals at: <http://members.shaw.ca/shawna.kaminski> . She does one-on-one personal training or she can work with you online by going to the 'online training' page on her website.