

Health

When joining a club, look for helpful staff and a comfortable atmosphere

When thinking about joining a fitness club, people should look for friendly, knowledgeable staff, clean facilities and a comfortable atmosphere, says fitness club managers.

"When looking for a gym don't sit on the phone," says Mary Merriott, assistant manager of The Works Fitness and Aerobics Centre. "If you don't ask questions, they aren't going to tell you."

Terry Nolan, general manager of Club Markham says it's alright to compare prices over the phone, but people should visit the clubs they are interested in to compare costs and facilities.

What to look for when visiting a club

When touring the facilities, people should look for the overall cleanliness and upkeep of the gym and equipment. Equipment should be in good repair and up-to-date. Locker rooms are a good place to judge cleanliness.

The club's atmosphere is important. If a person doesn't feel comfortable while touring, they won't want to work out.

By law, at least one staff member has to have first aid and CPR training. Staff should also be certified by

the Ontario Fitness Council or YWCA. People should ask to see their certificates for proof of qualification, says Merriott.

And staff should be willing to answer questions and help people with their program, says Nolan.

Before signing a contract, Nolan suggests people find out how long the club has been in business.

Fees

Prices vary from club-to-club. Some charge separate fees for the use of different equipment and people should ask what the fees cover, says Merriott. Despite the length of the contract, by law, clubs must offer its clients the option of paying month-to-month.

Once the contract is signed, people have five days from the time they signed it (also a law), to cancel without any explanation.

Once people find a club they are comfortable with,

they should ask themselves one more question - are they going to workout on a regular basis? "(Working out) has to be a part of your lifestyle," says Merriott.

Lifestyle has to change after heart disease problems

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my chest. The pills were hiding the (angina) all the time."

After many angina attacks, Ysseldyk was scheduled for bypass surgery.

Her surgery was on a Friday and on Sunday, the doctors made her get up and walk around.

On the following Friday she was sent home.

Energy is spent on charity work

Ysseldyk went back to work for a short time, but the stress of her job made her quit. Now she spends her time on charity work like the IODE and the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

And now she is doing everything right, she says. She gets her exercise by

walking in the mall in the winter and walking through the park with her dog Cricket in the summer. She also swims, but has given up biking for fear of falling. She tries to keep stress away, her weight down and she has given up smoking.

But fat she says, is the enemy. "Anything that will harden in the fridge will do the same in your body," she says. So now Ysseldyk takes the fat off the chicken, doesn't eat the burnt part of a roast (where she came from the fat was suppose to be what kept you warm in the winter), she cooks with herbs and extra light virgin olive oil and eats lots of vegetables.

"I try to do most things right, but I don't deprive myself of everything." But "your lifestyle has to totally change."

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