

Hitting the GYM

DISCLAIMER: To develop an exercise program that best suits your needs, please consult with your physician. It is important to talk with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

by Madalyn Rivera, BS

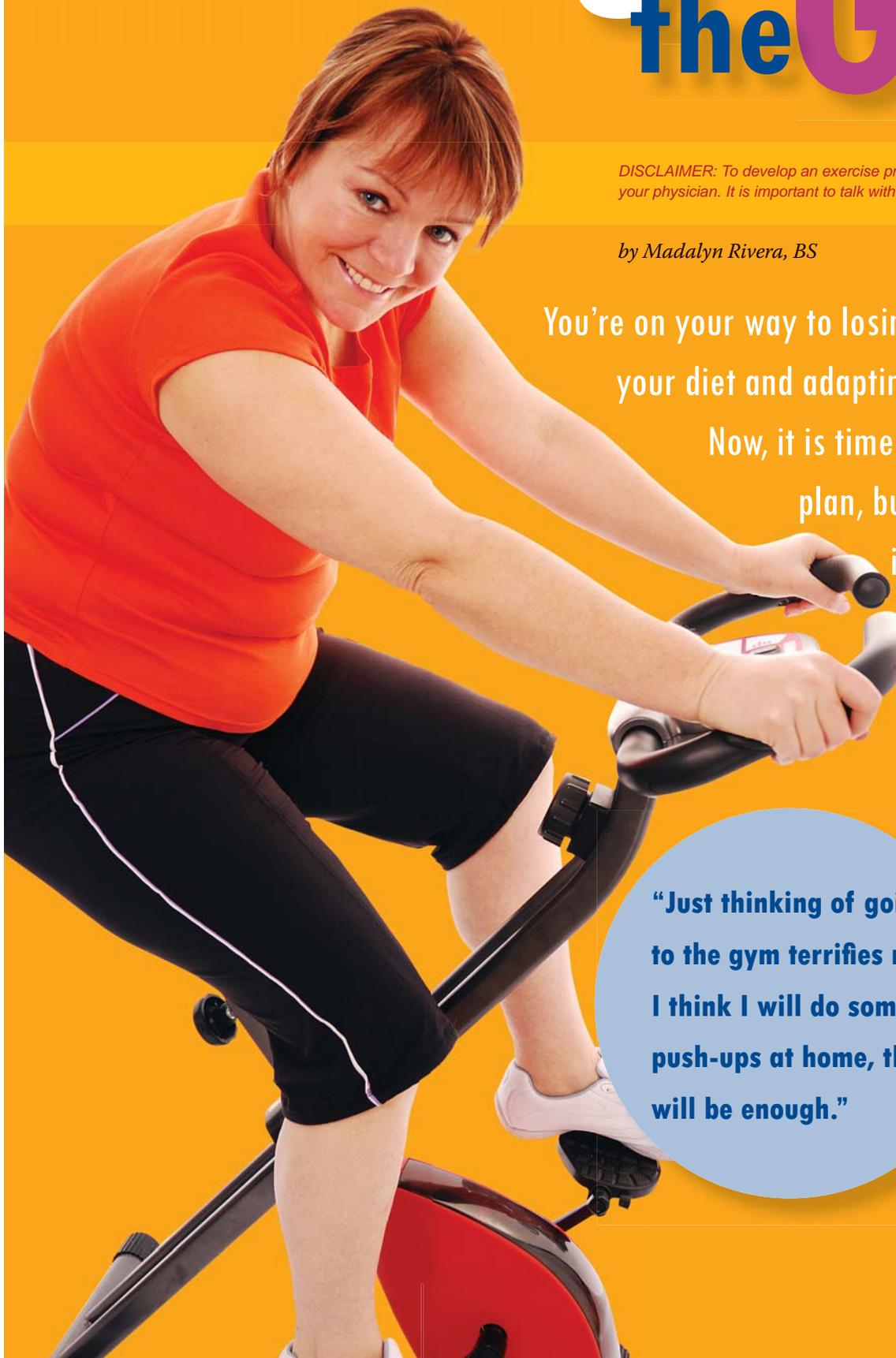
You're on your way to losing weight by sticking to your diet and adapting to new lifestyle changes.

Now, it is time to add exercise to the plan, but joining a gym can be intimidating. You may be thinking...

"People at the gym are so fit and will judge."

"Just thinking of going to the gym terrifies me; I think I will do some push-ups at home, that will be enough."

"I can't go to a gym until I lose more weight."



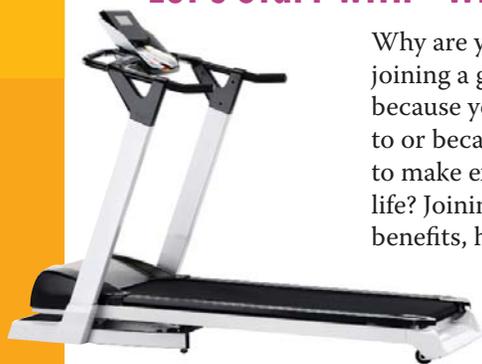
SMART goals

S-specific, M-measurable, A-attainable, R-realistic and T-timely

These thoughts and words are some I have had myself and also heard from some of my clients. The gym can be a scary place, especially if you have no idea where to begin. Well, I am writing to help you.

Let's Start with "Why?"

Why are you thinking of joining a gym/health club? Is it because you feel like you have to or because you really want to make exercise part of your life? Joining a gym has many benefits, here are a few:



- **There is a wide variety of equipment to choose from to create a well-balanced exercise program.**
- **You will find resourceful staff members there to help you.**
- **You can meet people who are just like you they also want to change their life for the better!**
- **It's a great place to go to release stress away from home and work.**
- **It's like health insurance except you know what you are paying for and there is no deductible if you do not lose weight!**

I hope this short list helps with the "why." Let's talk about what type of gym next.

Type of Gym

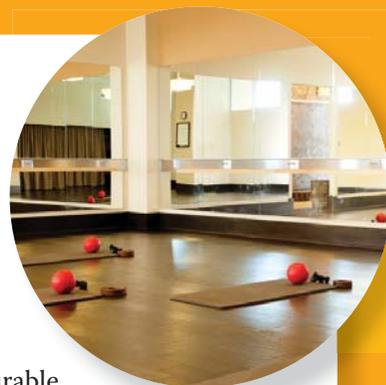
There are many types of gyms that fit any individual. There are women-only, medical fitness facilities, 24-hour gyms, sport-specific, functional

training, Yoga and Pilates studios, pole dance studios (yes), large commercial gyms, small gyms, personal training studios, and I am sure many more.

Feeling overwhelmed, let's take a look at your SMART goals – S-specific, M-measurable, A-attainable, R-realistic and T-timely.

If you just want a gym to get started, the small gyms and large commercial gyms are a great place to start. Most of the large commercial gyms have group fitness classes that you can start with. These classes will help you stay on a schedule and you know what you are doing once you walk through the doors. If group fitness classes are not for you, most of these gyms offer a free personal training session in the beginning (take advantage of this).

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When you go in and talk to a sales representative about a membership or a trial, ask about how you can sign-up immediately for your free session. Share your goals with every fitness staff person you come into contact with. You will be amazed how encouraging they can be!

Setting Your Plan

Now you're on a roll to get going! You figured out why you want to join the gym and what you want to get out of your investment to health. You may be thinking, "So how do I get started if I did not meet with a trainer and just want to get going?" Well, now you are a member and you put your first "workout" in your calendar.

Before I move on, I want to express how important and helpful it is to schedule workouts or just call it "me time." Make an appointment with yourself. You are the most important person in your day, so make an appointment first thing before you get booked up!

Getting Started

First, start out with a warm up. Get those fit juices flowing by walking or doing some light calisthenics such as jumping jacks, push-ups, etc. Do a warm-up for about five minutes. You are all warmed up and ready to begin, but you are wondering, "Should I strength train or do cardio first?" This question is a whole article in itself, so let's start basic.

What is your specific goal? If you're trying to increase muscle, then strength train first. Or, if you're trying to increase your cardio fitness, do your cardio first. To just lose those pounds, just start exercising! If you are new to strength training, my suggestion is to do weights first, due to the fact that increasing muscle is very important to start and sustain weight-loss. After strength training, you can finish with cardio or whatever your schedule allows. Work large muscles first such as chest, back and legs. You can also start with abdominal exercises. Finish with small muscles such as biceps and



triceps, shoulders and calves. You can do a full body workout three days a week or you can do an upper and lower split four days a week. Here is an example full body workout:

- **Abdominal crunches**
- **Chest press**
- **Lat pull down**
- **Squats**
- **Lunges**
- **Shoulder press**
- **Bicep curl**
- **Triceps curl**
- **Calf raises**



You can use dumbbells, a barbell or machines for any of these exercises. You can also just start with no weight to make sure you are using correct form to prevent injury and really get a smart workout. If you are not sure how to do these, a fitness professional at the gym will be able to show you correct form.

Incorporate cardio four to five days per week from 30-60 minutes. If you are just starting, you can begin with 15-20 minutes and increase your time each week.



You Can Do It

I hope you feel less intimidated. Just thinking about walking into the gym is intimidating, but gyms are for people like you, me and everybody – to workout and get healthy. Everyone there has the same intentions you do. Fitness comes in many shapes and sizes, so feel proud that you are taking the steps to be as fit as you can be!

About the Author:

Madalyn Rivera, BS, is a Wellness Coordinator at the Westview Healthplex Sportsclub in Indianapolis, Indiana, which is a medical fitness facility. She has been involved with fitness for more than 10 years and has just recently focused on wellness.



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



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LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



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