

## Fitness For Your Body And Wallet: Shedding Pounds Without A Gym Membership

New Year's resolutions can be fantastic motivating tools, and many of us use that motivation to improve our health. Thirty-seven percent of Americans resolved to lose weight, while another 32% resolved to stay fit and healthy in the New Year. No one knows that better than the weight loss industry, which ramps up its marketing this time of year. You've no doubt seen offers for free months and other discounts at local and national gym chains.

What these advertisements leave out is that gym memberships are still very expensive. Nationally, gym memberships average \$58 per month. That's bad enough before you start adding in contract initiation fees and other upfront charges. If you want to get fit, but don't want to pay those exorbitant fees, there are a few strategies you can try. Give these budget- and body-friendly ideas a chance. It might help you along the path toward a happier, healthier 2017!



### 1.) Diet

Honestly, it doesn't matter how much you work out if you're not eating well. You won't lose weight. You'll still also suffer the side effects of a poor diet, like low energy and high blood pressure. Trying to get healthy with just exercise is like trying to fix a heater by changing the thermostat.

According to nutritionist Shawn Talbott, weight loss is 75% diet and 25% exercise. The biggest factor in losing weight is your basal metabolic rate (BMR), which is how much energy your body burns throughout the day. This is usually in the vicinity of 2,000 calories. Running a mile burns about 100 calories, or 5% of your BMR. Worse yet, exercise can have a paradoxical effect with a bad diet. After a vigorous workout, you're more likely to snack. It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking you've "earned" an indulgent reward after a run or bike ride. You can easily wipe out all the good you've done with a bowl of ice cream.

Use a calorie tracking app like Myfitnesspal to get a sense of where your calories are going now. You might be surprised at how much you can save with a few easy cuts! Diets don't have to be extreme or restrictive to result in real, lasting changes to your body.

### 2.) Body weight exercise

One of the biggest reasons people give for joining a gym is access to strength training equipment. It's true that cardio alone won't help as much as strength training. It's not true, though, that you need expensive machines for it!

Three simple exercises can help tone trouble spots and reshape your body. Planks work your core, arms and shoulders. Squats work your glutes and legs. Toe raises work your calves. You can find tutorials for these and countless variations online. The challenge is to pick a routine and stick with it.

Another direction for body weight exercise is yoga. You can find tutorials online for strength-building yoga you can do in your home at your own pace. This can be a lot less intimidating than a class because no one can see if you mess up. Lots of yoga poses work on muscle building and flexibility. These can help tone and shape your body, ensuring your weight loss focuses on fat, not muscle.

### 3.) Make your own groups

One appeal of a gym membership is the camaraderie formed by group exercise classes. The scheduling of a class forces accountability, and working together can make the exercise seem less taxing. You can get these benefits outside the gym as well!

If you have several friends also interested in fitness, start building fitness activities, like hiking, bike riding or running, into your regular social time. Instead of going out for coffee, go for a run together!

If you're on your own, you can still find others who share your fitness goals. Use sites like Meetup to look for exercise groups that work at your skill level. If you're completely new, now's a great time, as there will be plenty of other people also starting a new fitness journey. If you're looking to take your fitness to the next level, challenge yourself by joining an advanced running or biking group. You can get fit and make new friends at the same time, without spending a big chunk of change on a gym membership.

#### SOURCES\*:

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