



Fitness Facts

Elliptical Trainers Make Significant Strides In Popularity

(NAPSA)—The results are in—elliptical trainers are rapidly becoming the fitness equipment of choice for thousands of gym-goers and home-fitness enthusiasts.

According to a report from the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association International (SGMA), elliptical trainers are gaining ground on treadmills as Americans' preferred method of cardio workout.

Treadmills experienced a 5 percent growth in sales from 2003 to 2004. During that same period, however, sales of ellipticals grew by more than 29 percent. Researchers say this growth in sales and popularity can be attributed to the fact that ellipticals offer an intense, full-body workout without the stress to one's body. Plus, ellipticals are easy to use, which appeals to first-time fitness enthusiasts and seniors.

However, experts say, it's important to note that not all ellipticals are created equally. When shopping for an elliptical, here are some factors to consider:

- **Stride Length**—When you walk, you have a natural gait, or stride length that's comfortable and efficient. Most people fall within an 18-inch stride length. It's important to look for an elliptical that best mirrors your natural gait. Be sure to try out the trainer while you're at the store.

- **Pedals**—When you walk or run, your feet are relatively close together. For maximum comfort, look for pedals that are close in proximity. Pedals that are too far apart can cause unnecessary stress on the user's lower back, hips and knees. In addition, look for pedals that pivot.



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- **Step-on Height**—When you step onto an elliptical, you don't want to feel like you're climbing up on an 18-wheel semi truck. Look for a low step-on-height, which translates to easier and safer access to the equipment.

- **Flywheel Weight**—The flywheel is a key component of the elliptical. It allows the pedals and hand grips to move. When researching ellipticals, it's important to look for a heavy-duty flywheel (at least 6.5 kilograms or 14 pounds). The heavier the flywheel, the more fluid the performance. It will also translate into a longer life for your elliptical.

- **Magnetic Resistance**—To make your workout more challenging, it requires resistance. Make sure the elliptical uses a magnet,

rather than a band, to create resistance. This results in quieter operation and a longer life.

- **Size**—Where are you planning to use your elliptical? Make sure it will fit in the space you have allotted. Some trainers can be big and bulky, so look for an elliptical that has a condensed footprint (length and width). And don't forget about height. You don't want to bang your head on the ceiling every time you work out. Look for a front-drive system. They tend to be much more compact than rear-drive ellipticals.

For example, Horizon Fitness is introducing a new elliptical platform that shortens the overall size of a traditional elliptical by 14 inches, yet still offers a full 18-inch stride length. The smaller-sized platform is designed for consumers looking for all the features of a full-size elliptical, without the added bulk and size.

“By stacking the flywheel, we've reduced the size and height of the elliptical, which means you can place it in compact areas of your home where other fitness equipment just won't fit—such as low-ceiling basements,” said John Erlandson, elliptical product manager for Horizon Fitness. “We've made the elliptical smaller without sacrificing key performance and comfort features.”

The EX series ellipticals from Horizon Fitness carry a suggested retail price of \$699 to \$1,999 and are available at sporting goods retailers across North America.

For more information, call 1-800-244-4192 or visit the Web site at horizonhealthyliving.com.