

FITNESS FACTS

When Visiting The Gym Is The Best Prescription

(NAPSA)—Research has shown that exercise can be good for what ails you—both in terms of preventing certain conditions and in alleviating the symptoms of existing chronic diseases.

For example, a recent study at Tufts University found that strength training can reduce the symptoms of heart disease, arthritis and type 2 diabetes, while also improving sleep and reducing depression.

Based on this research, many of the nation's 23,500 gyms and athletic centers are developing programs with specific targets:

- Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death, just behind smoking, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Physical activity is a proven, cost-effective therapy in preventing and treating obesity-related diseases. One of those diseases is type 2 diabetes, which now affects more young adults and children than ever before, threatening to wipe out 30 years of advancement in children's health.

At the Elmwood Fitness Center in Harahan, Louisiana, a 3-month weight loss program promotes the learning of new habits and lifestyle changes that provide permanent results. The program was developed by a fitness expert, exercise physiologists, nutritionists, behaviorists and weight-loss consultants.

An example of how exercise can help people with diabetes may be found at the Dedham Health and Athletic Complex in Dedham, Massachusetts. In partnership with the Joslin Diabetes Clinic, a worldwide leader in the study and care of diabetes, the center has designed exercise programs specifically to benefit people living with diabetes.



“Take a gym membership and call me in the morning,” may not be that far-fetched a prescription.

- A two-year study of 300 rheumatoid arthritis patients reported in *Arthritis and Rheumatism* found that those involved in a 75-minute exercise program twice a week showed greater improvement in functional ability, physical capacity and muscle strength. Exercise also helped decrease stress levels.

- According to research performed at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, physical activity has been shown to improve the quality of life for women with breast cancer and may help them live longer.

The Cancer Well-fit Program at Santa Barbara Athletic Club is structured to support cancer survivors' recovery process. Exercise protocols are individualized for each participant and include strength training, group exercise, aquatic therapy and movement therapy.

For more information on the health benefits of exercise, visit the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association at www.ihrsa.org.