

New year, new start, new you

Gone to seed over the Christmas break? Let our personal trainer and nutritionist get you back in shape in just four weeks

Week one

The workout

Commit yourself
Write down what you want to achieve and when you want to achieve it by.

Set realistic goals
Be honest about what you are capable of achieving, given your fitness level at the moment and the time available to you - set your goals accordingly.

Start slowly and build gradually
Too many people go mad in the gym in January, with the result that they either injure themselves or are burnt out before the month ends. If you want exercise to be a regular part of your life and you want to achieve good results, ease yourself into it. Try for one or two moderate sessions of about 30 minutes of exercise for this week.

Choose exercise you enjoy
If you aren't a morning person and you have always hated running, don't aim to get up before work and run five miles. Choose a time of the day when you are relaxed and can exercise without pressure. Then pick activities that you like, whether they are individual or part of a team.

Workout - attempt twice

Jog/walk/swim	15min
Chest press	2x15
Lateral pulldown	2x15
Squats	2x15
Shoulder press	2x15
Stomach crunches	1x15
Reverse crunches	1x15
Chest stretch	10sec hold
Hamstring stretch	10sec hold

The nutrition

Get clean
To get your diet and body back on track after the excesses of the Christmas break, first identify all the obvious toxins: alcohol, caffeine and cigarettes. Aim to reduce these three items in your diet over the next four weeks.

Focus on liquids
As you are consuming less coffee and tea, you will have plenty of room for the following: herbal teas, Chinese green tea and lots more water. Aim to drink a minimum of two to three litres each day. Remember that if you find yourself thirsty, you are already dehydrated - mental and physical performance will suffer as a result.

Recipe: oatmeal

- Oatmeal**
- Water or skimmed milk
 - Half a banana
 - Maple syrup
 - Walnuts, linseeds and

pumpkin seeds
Grind the nuts in a coffee grinder and sprinkle on top of the cereal or put into warming winter soups and salads. Grinding the nuts will release the essential oils, which are often not absorbed due to incomplete chewing.

Recipe: tuna omelette

- Four eggs**
One tin of tuna
One onion
Garlic, herbs, chilli, salt and pepper
Beat the eggs together with some milk while frying the tuna, onion and garlic in a pan. Add the eggs-and-milk mixture and cook until done. Flavour with chilli and herbs as desired.



Week two

The workout

Assess your progress
Always look back on your goals and see how you are progressing in relation to them. If you didn't manage any exercise in week one then perhaps you need to look again at your timetable and choose a different time for exercise, or a different activity. When it comes to sticking to exercise this stage of planning is crucial.

Monitor how you feel
If you wake up the day after exercising and you can't get out of bed then perhaps you have overdone it. Learn from this experience and moderate your exertions next time. Gradually increase what you do until you can achieve the same performance without the crippling pain afterwards.

Learn to rest
Just because the new you is a more active person, you don't have to be active all the time. Allowing your body to recover from exercise is as important as the exercise itself, so give yourself a day or two to rest, depending on how hard you have worked during your session.

Workout - three times

Jog/cycle/swim	20min
Chest press	2x15
Lateral pulldown	2x15
Squats	2x15
Shoulder press	2x15
Stomach crunches	2x15
Reverse crunches	1x15
Chest stretch	10sec hold
Hamstring stretch	10sec hold

The nutrition

Get the balance right
Most of us eat too much sugar and fat (cakes, biscuits, sweets, chocolate, confectionery) and not enough fruit, vegetables and high-quality food sources. The solution is all too simple: cut down on the former and consume more of the latter.

Stop eating out of boxes
By and large most foodstuffs out of a box have been fiddled with and tend to contain artificial additives, the wrong type of fats and plenty of sodium as well. Stick to fresh produce. And choose your carbohydrates carefully - some will cause your blood-sugar levels to rocket and then fall just as swiftly, leaving you feeling washed out. Others will keep energy levels on a nice even keel and keep hunger locked up. Visit www.mendoza.gilists.htm for a full list and description of different carbohydrates and the way they influence blood sugar. A good rule of thumb is to stick to foods that are as close to their natural state as possible.

Recipe: rice with haddock

- 350g wild rice
 - One pint of vegetable stock
 - 400-500g haddock fillet
 - 200g frozen peas
 - Freshly ground black pepper
 - Bay leaf
- Place the rice in a large pan with the stock and bay leaf and bring to the boil. Simmer for 15 minutes. Add the haddock and peas, and cook for a further five minutes or until all the liquid has been absorbed. Stir to break up the fish.



Week three

The workout

Too much of the same type of exercise will limit your progress, so try to vary what you do. Also, at this time of the year gyms are very crowded, so the odd outdoor run or cycle or trip to the pool will keep you away from the masses.

Keep records
Write down the activities you do. It is always satisfying to see completed exercises and to have a written record of your progress and set new goals.

Don't be easily put off
Life is difficult and things crop up unexpectedly. Deal with unforeseen circumstances and then get back on track as quickly as possible.

Reward yourself
If you plan for three sessions of 40 minutes' exercise this week and then achieve this, treat yourself to a reward.

Workout - three times

Jog/walk/swim/row	20min
Chest stretch	10sec hold
Hamstring stretch	10sec hold
Back stretch	10sec hold
Thigh stretch	10sec hold
Lateral pulldown	2x20
Shoulder press	2x20
Stomach crunch	2x15
Reverse crunch	2x15
Chest press	2x20
Lunges	1x20
Squats	2x20

The nutrition

As a rule, our palms offer a simple way to measure quantities. So aim for one palm of protein, a thumb of fat, limitless fibrous carbohydrates and a maximum of one palm of carbohydrates at each sitting. This might mean a salmon steak, a small bed of wild rice with sugar-snap peas and a rocket and Parmesan salad.

Develop good eating habits
Your caloric intake should be spread throughout the day, including three main meals and two or three snacks. Most energy-dense carbohydrates should be eaten earlier in the day so you can make use of the energy - a heavy meal in the evening will more likely than not see the calories laid down as body fat.

Recipe: chicken with wild mushrooms

- 300g chicken stock
 - Two or three free-range skinless chicken breasts
 - 10g unsalted butter
 - 300g of mixed fresh mushrooms
 - One large onion
 - 500g of bio yoghurt
 - Wild rice
- Bring stock to boil in a shallow pan. Add chicken breasts and cook for 20 minutes; remove chicken once cooked, add butter, onion and mushrooms to stock, and cook. Remove half mixture and blend in yoghurt, then return this mixture to pan and warm through. Slice the chicken and serve on a bed of wild rice. Spoon over the sauce to taste.



Week four

The workout

Chances are that by now you will have found times to exercise that suit you and activities that you enjoy. Now plan your timetable for next month (and beyond), aiming to maintain this pattern.

Keep moving forwards
Progress in fitness and fat loss depends on challenging your body. Aim for either three sessions of 60 minutes or four sessions of 45 minutes this week. In the future, you don't need to keep increasing the length of each session or the number of sessions each week.

Keep your interest
The more different things you try the more you will enjoy your exercise and remain motivated.

Motivation through results
You will now have reached the end of January having begun to exercise and maintained your routine. This success should be all the motivation you need to keep up the good work in the coming months.

Workout - three or four times

Jog/walk/swim/row	15min on any two
Press-ups	2x15
Lateral pulldown	2x15
Squats	2x15
Shoulder press	2x15
Lunges	2x15
Stomach crunches	2x15
Reverse crunches	2x15
Chest stretch	10sec hold
Hamstring stretch	10sec hold
Back stretch	10sec hold
Thigh stretch	10sec hold

The nutrition

Most of us have about 10 different meals we know how to cook well. But try to pick a new recipe each week and try to include as many different ingredients as possible over your weekly intake. The more variety in your diet, the wider a cross-section of nutrients you will take in.

Look for dark colours...
Anything you eat that might stain a white shirt (beetroot, berry fruits) is loaded with protective nutrients, so look for lots of colours on your plate. At this stage, you may want to seek specialist advice or do your own research.

Recipe: banana and walnut cake

- Two large ripe bananas
 - 225ml orange juice
 - 300g of wholemeal self-raising flour
 - 100g of molasses sugar
 - Two or three egg whites
 - One tablespoon of flax seed oil
 - One teaspoon cinnamon
 - One teaspoon mixed spice
 - 50g mixed chopped walnuts
- Mash the bananas with the fruit juice. Mix together the flour, sugar and spices in a bowl. Add the banana-juice mixture together with egg whites and oil. Mix these together well. Spoon into a lightly oiled tin. Bake at 160C for an hour. (For apple cake, replace the bananas with three or four grated apples.)

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The Programme returns next week

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