



Spring Cleaning For Fitness

By Joe Stein, President



Spring is in the air: The clocks have switched to Daylight Savings Time, and opening day at Yankee Stadium is in sight. What better time to do some spring cleaning...not your garage...YOU!

Clean out your arteries

People who exercise their hearts on a regular basis live longer and healthier than those who do not. Much research has shown that cardiovascular exercise increases the strength of the heart, allowing it to pump more blood with each beat. In turn the increased blood flow carries more oxygen to the organs and muscles. On its journey, this blood acts like scrubbing bubbles, so to speak, and helps to scrape the build up of gunk on artery walls. Lowering bad cholesterol, increasing good cholesterol, and reducing blood pressure are additional benefits.

Clean out your refrigerator

Throw out all refined, simple carbohydrates. They metabolize quickly and convert to empty calories. But don't despair...“carb” is not a bad four-letter word. To improve the quality of your calories from carbs, eat primarily *complex* carbs, such as brown rice, sweet potatoes, whole wheat bread and oatmeal. Besides looking at nutritional labeling, you can easily tell if a carb is highly refined: if it's white, it's just not right. The more complex the carb, the slower it will digest and the longer it will take to impact blood sugar levels.

While in your refrigerator, look around. Do you see chicken, fish and lean meats pre-cut into pieces the size of decks of playing cards? If you find cheesecake, bacon or other high fat foods, don't panic. There are no bad foods, just inappropriate amounts of foods high in calories and fat. That's why these foods appear in the smallest window at the very top of the food pyramid.

Clean out the toxins

Even if you ate a high calorie, high fat diet in the past, all is not lost. Fruits and vegetables contain antioxidants and are high in fiber while low in calories. These antioxidants are molecules with receptors that attach to free radicals, the byproducts of normal metabolic processes, chronic diseases and environmental factors. If you eat a combined minimum of five fruits and vegetables each day, you will feel full. The antioxidant power of fruits and vegetables, especially those dark in color, will help lasso free radicals faster than a cowboy at a rodeo.

Clean out your closet

Spring is the time to commit to obtaining your fitness and weight goals. Nothing says retreat and surrender than a closet full of various sized clothes. Have a target and aim for it. If you want to be a size six, find a good charity and donate your size eights, tens and twelves. Not having a fallback position is great motivation to strive for success.

Clean up your act

This list is by no means complete, but it is a good start. Be positive and believe you can improve your condition. Do not absorb the negativity of the nay-sayers. The short-term benefits of cleaning up your act are reduced body fat and an increased energy level. Over the years, these changes will multiply and help you live well. And isn't living well the best revenge?

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