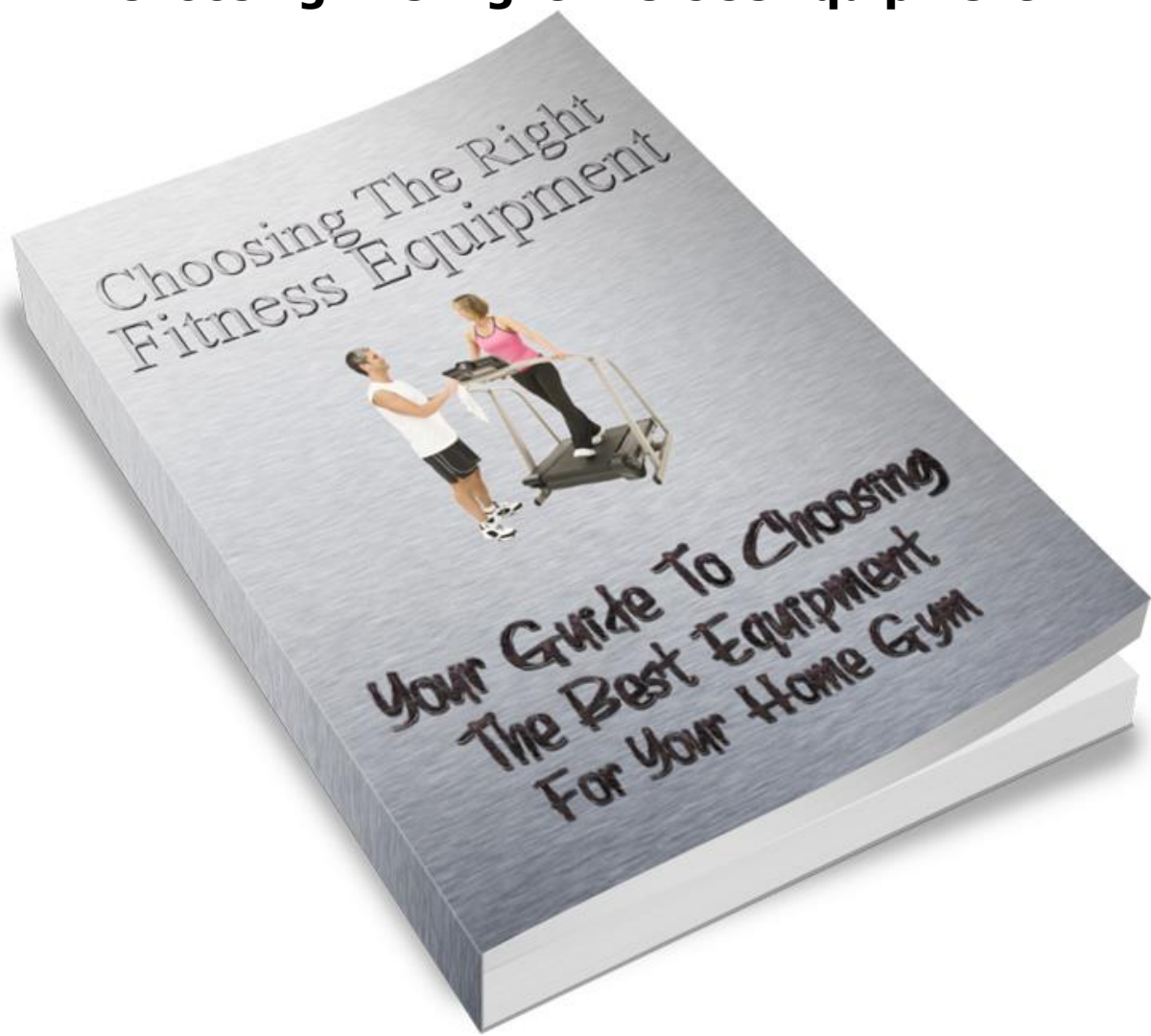


Choosing The Right Exercise Equipment



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Choosing The Right Exercise Equipment

A Quickie Guide to Purchasing Used Exercise Equipment

Let's face it. Exercise equipment is expensive. Treadmills, elliptical trainers, weight-lifting machines, and exercise bikes can cost anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. Yet many people still feel that an exercise machine is the best way for them to get in shape, even if they can't quite afford the hefty price tags, so they think that perhaps a used machine is the best way to go.

In fact, buying used equipment can be an affordable way to get a high-quality machine. However, it can also be a chance for some unscrupulous seller to saddle you with a worn-out piece of junk. However, the result doesn't have to be left to chance. Armed with a little bit of knowledge, and prepared to do some research, you can turn the search for used equipment from a grab-bag game of chance to an opportunity to score a great deal.

There are two main sources of used exercise equipment. The first is from individual, non-commercial sellers. These are generally the people on eBay and in the newspaper classifieds who have finally decided that they're never really going to use that treadmill collecting dust in the garage, after all.

These are also the people who used their exercise bike every day, and are only selling this one to make room for the newer, shinier, latest version. In either case, some equipment will be like new, and some will be about as far from new as you get. About the only way to know for sure is to see the machine for yourself.

If you're looking in the newspaper, the solution is relatively simple. When you call the number in the ad, tell the person selling it that you want to see it and try it out before you buy it. If he or she refuses, then don't buy from that person. (If you or the person selling the machine is worried about being alone with a stranger, remember that you would have to meet to deliver the equipment, anyway, and you can both have someone else with you.

This may be obvious to both parties, but I'll go ahead and spell it out, just in case.) When and if you go to check out the equipment, make sure that it isn't missing any parts, that it isn't rusty or worn-out in key areas, and that it actually works. Turn it on and try it for a few minutes to make sure it runs smoothly.

Keep in mind that used machines don't come with warranties, and that it may be harder to find replacement parts for older brands and models. If you decide to buy it, make sure you have each other's name and number, in case something else comes up in the future.

If you're looking on eBay or another online auction site, then it probably won't be feasible for you to fly out to California or Wisconsin to check the equipment. However, most sites like eBay have a rating system, where you can check whether or not the seller has sold other things through the site, and if so, how satisfied his or her previous customers were. Check any posted

pictures carefully for signs of wear and tear, read the information the seller provides on what is included, and if it doesn't answer all of your questions, you can email him or her to ask for more information.

A second source of used exercise equipment is remanufactured equipment, sometimes known as refurbished or reconditioned equipment. Many larger gyms lease their exercise equipment for a few years instead of buying it, so they can upgrade more easily and more often. When they return the equipment to the manufacturer, it is then resold to a re-manufacturer who restores it and sells it for up to 30-70% off the original price.

The main problem with this route is the lack of standardized quality control. While some companies will strip a unit down to the frame, replace any worn or broken gears, grips, or other parts, run diagnostics to make sure everything works, repaint it and otherwise clean it up until it is as good as new, or maybe even better, other, less scrupulous companies may simply slap a coat of paint over the rust. However, as with any company, a little checking should tell you if a re-manufacturer or reseller is reputable.

Although you may run some risks in buying used exercise equipment, if you follow these guidelines, you should be able to get a good quality machine at a much lower price.

All in One Workout Machines – Take It or Leave It?

Getting in shape is important because you'll live a longer and healthier life. However, there are a lot of different types of exercise machines on the market, and it can be hard to know which one you need. You'll see a lot of different promos on TV for all in one fitness machines. You need to know what machines will do it all, and how you can set up a home gym that is practical for your exercise goals.

In truth no one machine can do it all, especially if you have different health and fitness goals that you want to achieve. It would be nice if one piece of exercise equipment did do it all, but for most people it won't. Usually, if you have one spot that needs training there are several more that do too.

Once the body goes flabby without the correct exercise, you'll need to get in a total body workout to get fit. Remember, before you try any type of machine or exercise program to consult with your doctor. The goal is to get you healthy and active, and not to cause any more damage to your body.

The number one mistake most people make is that they don't have a targeted exercise program to get into shape. If you don't know what yours should be, consult with your doctor, and a fitness trainer at your local gym. If you can afford it, take on a personal trainer for an assessment of your workout routine needs.

Of course barring any serious health care issues, being in shape could mean more than just losing weight. It could be having a six pack is your ultimate goal. It can be done at home;

you'll just need to plan on how to get it first, and then planning your home gym around your goals.

Another problem for you might be that you've been suckered into the latest fads of exercise equipment, or even the local sales at your discount store. In combination with not knowing what your fitness needs are, and depression over not seeing results with the workout machines that you've bought, your equipment might just be used for a coat rack, or to stack newspapers on.

A lot of people have been through this, but you can correct it by planning your home gym needs. Ask yourself what are your goals, will you really use it, and can the machine be used for a variety of exercises. Cost is another factor that you'll have to know because it determines part of your exercise program.

Even though cost does figure in on what you can buy, you can still have a gym. For example, if you want to get your heart rate up, take a walk, or you can buy a treadmill for at home use. There are fancy ones, with heart rate monitor and water bottles, but you can check your own pulse rate, and keep a bottle of water nearby.

You can even use your treadmill for making your legs stronger. If building muscle is your thing, then consider beginner's weights, an exercise ball, and a jump rope. You get the exact same type of workout for under \$200.00 that you can get with an expensive treadmill with weights included. Even a total body workout is possible if you buy a resistance band.

If a complete body workout, and targeted problem areas, requires different types of exercise equipment, it stands to reason that one machine can't do it all. Don't be discouraged though; even if you can't afford the expensive stuff, or even the minimal home gym workout equipment, there is still a way to exercise. Look around your house and improvise with what you have.

Clean out the refrigerator and put water in old milk containers, or use your interior stairs to take a few laps up and down for cardio fitness, and to help you build leg strength. If you can purchase an exercise ball, it will work all areas of our mid trunk and stomach, plus you can make your back stronger. Average cost for an exercise ball is around \$40.00, and they come with beginner's instruction on basic exercises.

Remember, it takes more than a machine to make you healthy. Mostly it takes a lot of patience and desire to work through and with any type of exercise equipment you use. Take your time and save up for the different types of equipment you want for your home gym. You can do it all, just believe that you'll succeed.

Avoiding the Scam Factor When Purchasing Your Home Gym Equipment

As you flip through the TV channels late one night, an infomercial catches your attention. It's an ad for the latest trend in fitness, an exercise machine that will give you the physique of a supermodel or bodybuilder in "just minutes a day!" For the next half hour, various doctors, celebrities, and "people just like you" all offer their personal testimonies and expert opinions on

why and how the machine gets such miraculous results. As you watch the dramatic "Before" and "After" pictures, you wonder, "Is this too good to be true?"

Unfortunately, it probably is. While some very reliable and successful products got their start on TV infomercials, some are simply a waste of money, or even outright scams. And scams are not limited to the "As Seen on TV" products. They can be found in magazine and newspaper ads, in personal encounters, and occasionally even in stores.

However, you don't have to live in fear of being scammed. A little homework and common sense are usually enough to decide if the equipment is worth what you'll be paying for it. Here are some things to look out for when considering a product:

- * Check their sources. If the salesperson mentions a research study that supports their product, find out where it was published, who it was written by, and who funded the study and why. Look for reputable sources, such as the Journal of the American Medical Association. Also check the factors involved in the study, such as the number of subjects involved, and whether any key variables were left out.

- * Add up the numbers. "Just \$29.95 a month" sounds great-- until you multiply it by ten months, add in the shipping and set-up fees, and calculate the sales tax...

- * Warranties are usually a sign of reliability. After all, if a company puts that much faith in its product, it must be pretty good, right? Still, you need to read the fine print. Money-back guarantees and warranties aren't so great if you're the one stuck paying hefty shipping fees. You might also try calling the company's customer service representatives to see how helpful they really are.

- * Be wary of celebrity endorsements. Just because they're famous doesn't automatically make them an expert, and even if it actually works for them, it doesn't automatically mean it will work for you. And the celebrity may not be the only actor in the commercial. Not all who claim to be doctors on TV ever went to med school.

- * Be skeptical of testimonials from satisfied customers. Remember that "results not typical" means "probably won't be you", and those results probably came from a program that included a full workout along with a change in diet.

- * When you read a review of the product, check to make sure the reviewer is unbiased. The ideal reviewer should not have been paid to promote the product, or be selling the product himself. For that matter, you should make sure that isn't getting paid to give an unfairly poor review of the product in order to sell a rivaling product.

- * Check websites such as the Federal Trade Commission or the Better Business Bureau to see if the person or company selling the product has been involved in previous scams, or if there have already been numerous complaints about this product.

- * While specific muscle groups can be targeted for strengthening, fat is distributed evenly across the body, and it is lost the same way. You cannot lose fat in just one part of your body. You just can't. If a product claims to do so, be skeptical.

* Losing weight and getting in shape takes effort and time. Don't believe claims that a particular machine can do otherwise.

* Finally, before you buy anything, ask yourself if you will actually use it. It doesn't matter how spectacular, how reliable, or how good of a deal a piece of equipment is; if the only exercise you get is from dusting it every week, then it was a waste of money.

Remember, the best way to get in shape and to stay healthy is a long-term lifestyle commitment, with a healthy, reasonable diet, and an exercise routine that works out your entire body. If, after all these reality checks, the product in question still seems like the perfect fit to your lifestyle, then go ahead and give it a try.

Exercise Equipment Options for the Disabled

No matter whether you are temporarily disabled because of an injury or permanently disabled, exercising with a disability brings out a whole different set of challenges than exercising without one. Thankfully, more equipment is being made available to assist the disabled in developing fitness routines. Many products can also be used as therapy exercises for those recovering from illness or injury. Here are just some of the products available.

Recumbent steppers allow users to use a step machine from a seated position. Portable, they can be used in a variety of locations or by different users. The user steps down on the machine with a motion like you would use for walking or climbing stairs.

Usually done with a hydraulic cylinder system, they respond to the amount of pressure applied to them and have adjustable resistance. Using a recumbent stepper can help improve balance and endurance, strengthen lower body muscles, and lose fat without impacting the joints or back.

Another option is a recumbent bike. There are several styles available. For users who are able to transfer to a seat, a standard recumbent bike can be used. The sitting position makes it easier on the joints and the back. It is also more comfortable for those who have loss of mobility due to arthritis.

For users who are confined to a wheelchair, an ergo meter may be a good choice for exercise. Some styles are a large machine that allows a wheel chair to be rolled directly onto the machine for leg or arm use or has an optional seat attachment for users not confined to a wheelchair. Other styles are more portable, and can be brought directly to a table for upper body use or placed on the floor for lower body use. They are good for a cardiovascular workout as well as building upper and lower body strength.

Sit-to-Stand machines can help with rehabilitation in building the muscles needed to get stand up from a sitting position. It is perfect for those who have been confined to a wheelchair due to injury or medical conditions.

The seat is adjustable so that you can find the perfect height, and the percentage of assistance can be adjusted as well. The patient is then able to perform a sitting and standing motion exercise without the need of a therapist manually lifting and lowering the patient. The therapist can adjust the assistance as needed to complete the workout.

Stretching machines can help with rehabilitation as well. From simple rollers that slip onto shoes for ankle stretches to full body machines, stretching has many benefits. It can make movements easier and improve posture. It can increase flexibility for those who suffer pain due to lack of flexibility in major muscle groups or joints and increase range of motion. It can also improve circulation, which can help prevent degenerative diseases like arthritis or osteoporosis. Take care to perform stretches properly, as improper technique can lead to injury.

Balance boards are often used in physical therapy exercises to help improve awareness of the body. Use of balance boards can help improve balance and coordination, build core strength and stability, improve posture and lower body range of motion, and speed reaction time to prevent future injuries. The patient stands on a board that has a ball or rod on the bottom. By keeping his balance while the board wobbles helps to build up the different core muscle groups.

Disabled users can often use standard exercise machines as well. Arm curls and lateral pulls can often be done from a wheel chair, and some lower body exercises on machines can be performed without using the upper body. Assistance may be required to adjust weights or height of equipment. Free weights and ankle or wrist weights may also be used for additional resistance in some cases.

Regardless of what exercise equipment you choose, it is important to work closely with your doctor or physical therapist when coming up with a workout routine. Depending on the circumstances behind your disability, improper exercise could cause further injury. Choose exercises that are both fun and effective and try to vary your routine to prevent boredom. Always listen to your body to know when to stop. Stop if you feel winded, fatigued or experience pain or dizziness.

Helpful Hints on Choosing a Gym that Suits Your Fitness Goals

This is the year that you will get fit and you are scouring the telephone book for a gym to join. As you study the pages that display hunky guys with rippling muscles and wasp-waisted waifs with long blond hair, you wonder if there is a gym for you out there, you know regular people who are not built like that. You begin to feel hopeless and wonder if you need to join a gym and trim down before you can join any of those gyms and mingle with the hunks and babes.

Don't despair! Here are some great tips on choosing a gym that suits your fitness goals and will allow you to be comfortable in the process!

First of all, think about what you want from a gym. Sure, you want to get fit, but do you want to work out mostly on machines, such as stair climbers and stationary bikes, or are you looking for a facility that will allow you to play racquetball? Do you want something that offers lessons

in cardio kickboxing or maybe aerobics? Write down the kinds of exercises you enjoy and review your list. Bring it with you when you look around the different gyms to see how many items on your list would have to be crossed off if you were to join that particular gym.

Think about the amenities you will need. Do you want to shower on the premises? Ask to see the locker rooms and the shower. If there are a small number of showers, and you exercise during a busy time of the day, it is likely that you will have to wait your turn and this may cut into the time you will have for exercising.

Similarly, if you are concerned about on-site childcare, take a look at the childcare facility and ask about the safety procedures. Do not be afraid to get on your hands and knees and look at the place from a child's eye level...is it clean, safe, and fun? Do the attendants talk to each other instead of interacting with the kids? Is there a distinct barrier that will separate toddler and older children from the infants?

When you visit the gym, take a look around and see if it is clean, the paint is fresh, and the machines are new. If there is dirt in the corners, the paint is chipped in a number of places, and the machines are rusty, old, or have "out of order" signs, then it is best to move on.

Location is important! Do not join a gym that is too far off the beaten path and requires you to drive out of your way to get there. Odds are, when the novelty has worn off, you will not drive out of your way anymore. Similarly, check into the hours. Do they suit you? Different gyms offer different hours, and it is important to keep these in mind when choosing the right gym for you. It should be open for business when you are ready to give it some!

Take a look at the contract before you sign on the dotted line. If the sales rep says that you cannot take the contract home with you to read the fine print, or if you must make a decisions right there, right now, to get that super-duper special discount rate, then it is time to move on. Such high pressure sales tactics are not only unethical, but consider if you really want to do business with someone who pretty much forces your hand. Check out the contract for specified cancellations policies, rate increases, etc.

If you are very self-conscious about your look and worry about exercising in front of others, you may wish to join a same-sex gym rather than a co-ed one.

As you can see, there are a wide variety of gyms out there, and each has its special features, and perhaps a drawback or two. A little bit of research before you join will go a long way, and will ensure that you will enjoy many pleasant workouts in an environment conducive to your exercise goals.

Hit or Miss – Which "As Seen on TV" Exercise Equipment Actually Works

It truly is a gamble on which exercise products that are seen on TV late at night, or on Sunday afternoons, really work. There are a lot of products being advertised on TV for reputable companies, but they usually pay for an independent commercial of their own, like Nordic Track, among others.

However, that doesn't mean it's all junk as seen on TV, but you need to use a little caution when ordering. Some second rate whole sale junk is peddled, so you need to know the basics about how to order, so you won't get junk delivered to your house.

Wholesale second-rate products are advertised on TV, and it's hard to know what you should order, if you want to get back in shape. If some Hollywood stars advertise on the square box, then it must be a great product, right? Well, it could be, but when you're searching for quality, look for products that have a long-standing tradition because it does indicate longevity. A company can't stay in business very long, if a long list of complaints is lodged against them.

Another problem with as seen on TV exercise products is that you might go through the ringer in trying to get your money back on certain items. Work out tapes and CDs are fraught with complications because the damage could have happened in route to your house. Just like certain discount stores, if you open them, then it's your problem.

At least though with a discount store, you do have the option for exchanging it for a similar CD, or at least another one. You might need to check out the fact that even though there are a lot of good products there, you can often find the same products at a website, or with a local store, or dealer in town.

Sometimes exercise products might not do what they imply they will do too. Inference is a bad thing to apply to exercise equipment. For example, one mini trampoline might not have the construction elements to hold you if you're a certain weight. You could risk certain injury if you go on the idea that all trampolines are the same.

Broken bones, or using the product where it's not recommended, could even lead to a fatality. Read the fine print, and if there isn't any, don't buy it. Pick up the phone and call the Better Business Bureau if you think you should, and look for complaints on their website too. Most of all warn others not to buy it, and if they have to not use it, and lodge a complaint.

It's easy to get caught in the world of television, and the great selling points of products. When you're trying to get into shape always know your fitness goals. If you don't have an idea about it, then don't buy the products. It won't do you any good anyway, if you don't know what you need to work on.

Another tactic used is to promote one machine that will tone one area of your body, and then imply that the rest of your body will firm up because you're using a certain machine. There is only one way to get a total body-shaping figure, and that is to use a healthy dietary regime, and a total body workout.

The best approach to buying exercise machines is to go out and give it a whirl in a store. Wear the clothing that you'll exercise in, and ask questions to the sales person. Ask if the product you're interested in comes with the option to upgrade in the future. Also, look at the warranty, and if you can buy upgrades to it, if you can afford it. As far as space goes for your exercise equipment, be a little wary. Remember, that just like on the TV, a piece of exercise equipment will appear smaller than it actually is, so know the size of space you can put it in.

Finally, remember that if you see an exercise product on the ole TV, and it promotes wonderful results in a short period of time, know that it's a false claim. Getting your body out of shape took a while, and it'll take a while to get it back into a healthy body that you can be proud of.

Several Things to Consider When Purchasing a Treadmill

You have decided to start working out at home, and one of the pieces of equipment that you are thinking of buying is a treadmill. However, do not run out and buy the first one you see advertised in the newspaper or at the sporting goods store. Here are some things to consider when purchasing a treadmill.

The first thing to consider is the power behind the equipment. You will need a treadmill with at least 1.5 continuous duty peak performance. A Pulse Width Modulated motor will stand up to the test of time over a Solid State Control Rectifier motor. High torque at low revolutions also equals more power and durability.

The next thing to consider is the display console. Some will come with a display panel rivaling the Star Trek Enterprise, while others will have very few options. More options do mean more money spent, however you do need a display that covers speed, distance, time and pace. Some people also like to take advantage of a treadmill that offers preprogrammed workouts for ease of use.

The deck of the treadmill should be long enough to accommodate your full running stride. Test run the treadmill out before you buy to see if you feel comfortable on it. For most people, the deck should be at least 52 inches long and 16 inches wide in order to use it comfortably. A deck that is too short will only hinder your workout.

The frame of your treadmill should be a high alloy steel frame as that is much more durable than an aluminum one. Plastic covered wood or painted particleboard is not durable at all and should be avoided at all costs.

The rollers for the belt should be solid and a minimum of two inches in diameter. This will give you the most durability and comfort while using your treadmill.

If you want your treadmill to simulate outdoor forces for a more challenging workout, consider getting one that inclines. Make sure that you test out the incline before purchasing to ensure that you know how to use it and are comfortable with it.

If there are children in your household or if you are new to treadmill workouts, you may want to consider getting some extra safety features for you and your family's protection. One option is a safety key, which is required to turn the treadmill on. In some models, the key is also to be attached to the runner so if the runner falls the key is pulled out and the treadmill stops. Other models will have an emergency stop button that does just that – when pushed the treadmill stops immediately.

If you plan on keeping your treadmill around for a while, another thing to consider is the warranty. The higher quality treadmills will usually come with a longer and better warranty than the lower quality treadmills. You may also look into the availability of repairs in your area – if something breaks you do not want to be driving to the next state to get it repaired.

For the best workout, you are going to want a treadmill with a heart rate monitor to ensure that you are hitting your target heart rate range. There are several monitor styles available, including chest straps, finger or ear clips, or hand contact ones. Chest straps are usually the most effective. You should be comfortable with using the heart rate monitor and understand how it works.

Lastly there are some deal breakers for buying your treadmill, whether new or used. The motor should always run quiet and smooth regardless of whether it is your top running speed or the slowest walking pace. Test it out first, and if it becomes rough or loud do not buy it. The belt should always move smoothly regardless of speed as well. Watch to see that it does not skip, slip, or move around on the treadmill frame.

The treadmill should feel comfortable to you and allow enough length to accommodate your walking and running stride and size. It should always feel stable, even when in an inclined position. And you should understand how the controls work and be able to use them easily during use.

Armed with a little information, you can now go out and find the treadmill that is perfect for your workout needs.

Your Best Home Gym Options for Low Impact Exercise

It is sadly ironic that the very things that strengthen us can, at the same time, wear us down. For instance, even though high impact exercises, such as running or jumping, have a high number of benefits, including increasing bone density and strength, they can also put a lot of stress on your joints and bones.

This often discourages people from exercising as much as they should. What's more, it can be dangerous for people who already have problematic or weak joints. Fortunately, there are an increasing number of exercise machines that have been specially designed to minimize impact and stress while maximizing the benefits you receive from your workout. Some of the most popular are exercise bikes, rowing machines, and elliptical trainers. Let's take a look at these.

Exercise bikes, or stationary bikes, as they're sometimes called, have been a part of gyms and home exercise for decades. You can get a fairly decent bike for about \$300-\$600. The two main styles of bikes are upright and recumbent. Upright exercise bikes are positioned more or less like traditional bikes, while recumbent bikes position you so that you are lying back with your feet in front of you.

Recumbent bikes are generally much more comfortable than uprights, especially on the back and seat, but don't always offer as intense of a workout, since you can't stand up and pedal like

on an upright. Stationary bikes can be good exercise, especially if you enjoy biking, but it has a fairly big disadvantage in that it usually provides a workout for the legs only.

Rowing machines are fairly self-explanatory: they are machines that simulate the movement of rowing a boat. They are popular with serious rowers trying to keep in shape when they can't be off the water, as well as with those people who just want a good workout. Rowing machines are considered by some to be one of the best cardiovascular workouts available, not to mention great for strengthening the upper body and legs.

Rowing machines range in price from about \$100-\$200 for a lower-end model, to \$1000-\$1500 for a higher-end model. Resistance is provided to the bars that you pull in four different ways: air, hydraulics, water, and magnetism. Air resistance works by means of a fan that spins as you pull, making for a fairly smooth approximation of rowing a real boat. Hydraulics provide resistance through hydraulic cylinders, or pistons; they're less expensive than other models, but aren't quite as smooth as other types of rowing machines.

Models using water resistance probably come closest to imitating the feel of rowing, since you're pulling the bars through actual water in a small tank. Magnetic models are more expensive, but are very smooth and quiet, and don't suffer from as much wear and tear as other models.

Elliptical trainers are relatively new to the fitness world, compared to other machines, yet they have quickly become one of the top choices for low impact exercise equipment. You stand on a pair of large pedals which move around a wheel to combine the walking stride of a treadmill with the low impact movement of a stationary bike for a smooth gliding motion that burns a lot of calories. What's more, many models include cross-training bars that will strengthen your arms, which makes it a full-body workout.

Decent elliptical trainers can be found for as little as \$200-\$600, or as much as \$2500. When looking at elliptical trainers, you should keep in mind that larger wheels at the front mean a sturdier machine, especially if you tend to throw your weight forward as you exercise; magnetic brakes are much more reliable than friction brakes that wear out too quickly; articulating footpads will help keep your feet from going numb; and the ideal stride length for most people is about 18-21 inches.

Anything shorter will probably be too uncomfortable, unless you're shorter than normal. Also check the width of the stride: many elliptical trainers place the feet too far away for true comfort. Other than that, though, elliptical trainers seem to be one of the best choices available.

While many people can weigh in with their opinions and judgments on what works best, the only one who can truly decide what equipment is best for your home is you. Hopefully this information will help you make that decision.

Choosing an Effective Machine to Work Out Your Abs

You have exercised, eaten right, and still your abs are not what you want them to be. You finally acknowledge what in your heart have already known for a while; it is time to get out the big guns. The exercises you have been doing are all good and well, but if you want to finally work out your abs to their fullest potential you will need to invest in exercise equipment that will help you do the job.

Yet which machine should you choose? How do you know if it will be effective, or if it is simply just another fad designed to reduce the weight of your wallet rather than your waistline? Here are some tried and true machines that are effective as well as reasonably priced.

Probably the most famous piece of equipment for working out your abs is the "Ab Slide" which comes with a little exercise mat to rest your knees on. The idea is to slide forward and back with the slide, while relying on your abs to do the majority of the work. While you are training, you will also work on the muscles in your arms and back.

As you get more comfortable with the equipment and your strength, you will be able to slide out further, resulting in a more intense workout. One of the greatest benefits of this little gadget is its portability. It is small enough to fit in a box in your closet when not in use, and will not take up a large chunk of your bedroom.

The predecessor of the "Ab Slide" was the exercise wheel. If you choose to go this route, be sure to purchase one that will work on carpeted as well as smooth surface floors, since some of the older models will not work well on tile or hardwood floors.

Another machine that is well known is the AbEx, sometimes referred to as the "ab-roller." Targeting not only the lower abs and upper abs but also the oblique muscles, this machine encourages leg lifts powered by the abdominal muscles. Because the head is resting and the arms are holding on to the sides of the machine, you are less likely to pull your muscles when getting tired and your form is starting to get sloppy.

If you are absolutely dedicated to getting your abs in shape, and if you have the money and the space to store it, then an adjustable exercise bench will probably be a wonderful way to go. It easily grows with your increasing strength and can be adjusted for added resistance to further your workouts.

If you are dedicated but do not wish to have a lot of bulky equipment in your home, you may wish to consider purchasing the "Ab Revolutionizer" which works your abs when doing crunches. What adds another benefit to this machine is the fact that you will be able to also do sit-ups which have long since been known to work your abs for all their worth.

As you can see, machines that will provide you with an adequate ab workout are plentiful and come in a large variety of price ranges. Before you buy, however, it is best to ascertain which model will suit you best, since a machine's effectiveness is determined directly by your willingness and ability to use it. To this end, consider these questions before parting with your hard earned money:

How many different exercise routines will you be able to perform with any given machine? If you are easily bored with exercise, you will want to choose a machine that will permit you to vary your exercise regimen.

Will you be able to store the machine? There is nothing worse than having another towel rack in the bathroom, this one in the form of an exercise machine. If storage is of great concern to you, then it is important that you buy something small enough, otherwise the machine will either not leave the box at all, or become banned to the garage...and who wants to sweat to the light of one lonely, naked light bulb every night?

Identifying Your Exercise Goals Will Lead You to the Right Equipment

Depending on what your goal from exercising is can have a major impact on the equipment that you will need for your home gym. If your goal is to burn calories, the equipment may be somewhat different than someone who wants to pack on the muscle.

For those who are interested in burning calories and losing weight, aerobic exercises are generally your best bet. While many aerobic exercises can be performed outdoors, sometimes it is more convenient to have the ability to do exercises inside as well.

A good investment of aerobic trainers is a treadmill. You can use it for both running and walking depending on your workout level. A good treadmill will be solid, run smoothly and quietly, have a deck long enough to accommodate your stride, and have a heart rate monitor.

Another good investment is an "exercise" or stationary bike. Low impact and easy on the joints, it is a piece of equipment that nearly everyone can use. Once you have decided what style you want, either upright or recumbent, and then look for a bike that runs smoothly and quietly at all speeds and offers adequate resistance. It should also be adjustable to a height that will fit your particular body type.

Also in aerobics, it is important to protect your self from impact. Use floor mats that absorb impact for exercises indoors. Always wear well-supporting shoes. Shoes should offer adequate cushion, fit properly, and be in good condition.

For aerobics, it is also fun to include a variety of workouts. Many people find instructional videos to be very helpful as well as fun to do. Choose a tape that is within your skill level, and make sure that you are comfortable with how exercises are performed to avoid injury.

If you are interested in packing on the muscle, weight training is probably more your style. This requires a whole different set of equipment.

One of the most crucial parts of weight training is the weights. These can come in a variety of styles and weights. You will want dumbbells in a variety of weights that will encompass your workout level and then some. These come in a variety of sizes and styles, from large metal ones to small rubber ones.

For the bigger weights, as well as certain types of exercises, you will also want a barbell with the accompanying plates. The weights vary in size from just over a pound to over 50 pounds, and again you could purchase the sizes that best fit your workout. It may be helpful to purchase a stand for it as well, especially if you plan on using heavier weights for bench pressing or squats. That way you have a place to set it if you get tired mid-workout, and it also works well for storage.

Another thing to consider is a weight bench. One that will recline will work for a larger variety of exercises than one that just lays flat. If you plan to combine your weights with aerobics or you are short on cash considering getting a large step with adjustable risers. The risers can be adjusted to make an incline bench, and you can use it for step-aerobic exercises.

If money is not so much of a problem, another option is to get a home gym. While these do come with a hefty price tag, they can be used for a variety of exercises. Some styles may eliminate the need for some or even all of your free weights.

If your workout goals are somewhere in between, for example, maybe you just want to trim and tone, your equipment needs may be somewhere in the middle. It is helpful to combine both the cardiovascular exercises with weight-training ones.

You could alternate days for your workouts, or combine them. Or you could consider doing both at once – such as wearing wrist or ankle weights while walking for more resistance. Having a treadmill and/or a bike a small collection of free weights can allow you to do a variety of exercises.

Knowing what your workout goals are can help you decide what equipment is right for you. Once you are properly equipped, you can go on to achieve the exercise goals you have desired. No matter what equipment you get, always ensure that it is in good repair and that you know how to properly use it to avoid injuries.

Realize Your Fitness Goals at Home Without Fancy Equipment

You know you need to exercise but you do not want to join the local gym. Perhaps the high-pressure sales tactics have turned you off to the whole experience, or maybe you just don't like the idea of dealing with other people's sweat on highly coveted equipment. Maybe the fees are too steep and perhaps you also don't relish the idea of driving to and from the gym every day. Whatever the case may be, you want to exercise but not at the gym.

For all those who fall into this category, the good news is that you do not need a fancy gym to get and stay in shape. Yet how can you achieve your fitness goals at home? Do you need to invest in a variety of expensive machines that take up a lot of space? You can do so, of course, if you have the money and the space. As a matter of fact, some little gadgets are quite helpful, but you can still realize your fitness goals at home without all of the fancy equipment manufacturers would like to lead you to believe is a "must-have".

Here are some tips and tricks that will keep most of your hard-earned cash in your wallet, while giving you some great exercise ideas.

At the gym they have fancy stair climbers. You do not need to spend the money on them. Instead, if you home has stairs, commit twenty minutes to climbing these stairs, up and down, until you are sweating and your heart rate is elevated. Your speed will gradually increase; so do not feel that you need to start out your first exercise day with a marathon up and down these stairs.

The trick to any kind of fitness regimen, at home or at the gym is to take it slow, warm up well, and then do just enough to get you sweating and your heart rate up. As your body's fitness and resistance grow, you will need to work harder and perhaps longer to achieve these two objectives, and this is a sure sign that you are getting fit!

At the gym you can walk or run on an expensive treadmill. At home, you can walk or run up and down the street, around the block, or down to the local park. Why not enjoy the sunshine in summer; the crisp air in fall, the light dusting of snow in the winter, and the friendly faces of neighbors year round while you exercise? If you have a dog, why not take the little pooch with you? Your dogs will thank you for the exercise, and will quite possibly keep you motivated to continue on with your exercise.

At the gym there are fancy weight lifting machines that seem to be relentlessly hogged by the jocks, and when they leave, the machines are left all sweaty and sticky. At home, you do not need a fancy machine to lift some weights. Do you have a cat? Lift the cat litterbag! Do you have a dog? Lift the dog food bag!

If you are willing to spend a few dollars on exercise equipment, go ahead and purchase a couple of sets of dumbbells. These versatile little fitness helpers are incredibly valuable to your home fitness regimen and cost only a very small amount of money. You can do traditional weight lifting exercises with them, or you can use them as you climb your stairs, or walk up and down the street.

Get to know your park. You will be surprised to note that many public parks have running track stations set up with bars, and other possible exercises that fitness buffs can engage in for free. Posted placards will explain the exercise that the station is designed for, and if you follow the track a few times a week, your will be rewarded with a rather challenging and fun workout.

As you can see, the possibilities or realizing your fitness goals from home are nearly endless, and all those who do not want to or simply cannot afford to join a gym will be able to enjoy just as much of a workout. Furthermore, the purchase of expensive machines is not required, and with a little ingenuity and some imagination, you will be able to exercise like the pros without having your bedroom overrun with machines that eventually will turn into nothing but bulky clothes hangers.

Vibration Exercise Equipment – Is It a Scam?

One of the newer products on the market is vibration exercise equipment. Claiming to help do everything from toning muscles to improving strength and bone density, some people are turning to this controversial equipment to reach their workout goals.

The theory behind vibration exercise equipment was actually generated for the Russian space program. With zero gravity, there is no resistance to work your muscles, and with prolonged stay in space can lead to muscle deterioration and even loss in bone density. To fight this, the Russians came up with vibration exercise.

The theory is simple. The person using the equipment merely gets onto a platform. They can stand, sit, lay down, or even focus the platform on certain body parts. This platform creates a vibration, which is sent through the body. In reflex the muscles contract. This causes tendons to stretch, and increases blood flow and improving blood oxygenation. This strengthens and tones them without effort on the person's part.

Since the vibrations get sent through the entire body, all the muscle groups are affected. Ultimately, the makers of the equipment claim that it will help increase range of motion, coordination, posture, bone density, and even decreases cortisol, the stress hormone. It is said to be relaxing, which lowers stress and can even eliminate tension related pain. They also claim that anyone can use the equipment – whether they are young or old, skinny or overweight, a seasoned athlete or beginning exerciser.

The efficacy of the equipment seems to be proven in the space program itself. With using the equipment, the Russian space team was able to spend a record of 420 days in space. In comparison, the Americans, who trained with traditional workout equipment, have only stayed 120 days because their bones and muscles started to give out.

Research now is turning to study the use of vibration exercise in medicine and rehabilitation programs. It is being used to help accident victims and coma patients regain use of their muscles with some success.

The makers of vibration equipment claim that the equipment stands up to the highest possible safety standards. The machine itself seems to be user-friendly – they take up little space and do not require much maintenance. They are reputed to be so easy to use that you do not even need to change your clothes. However, if your goal is to lose weight, you may wonder whether or not the equipment will work with you.

One thing to keep in mind is that astronauts, and the sports teams endorsing vibration exercise equipment, are already in a pretty healthy state. They watch what they are eating and are active. It is kind of hard to binge on potato chips and ice cream when you are thousands of miles away from the closest convenience store.

To get the most out of any workout, including that with vibration equipment, to get the best results you will want to make lifestyle changes as well. This includes everything from eating a healthy diet to taking vitamins, to spending fewer hours in front of the TV. Before starting any

new exercise program, you should always speak with your doctor. This is especially true if you have experienced illness or injury, or if you are elderly or severely overweight.

There are some specific instances where vibration technology should not be considered an option. These include, but are not limited to, pregnancy, advanced heart disease, if you have a pacemaker, if you have just had surgery, if you have hip or knee implants, severe diabetes, epilepsy, severe migraines, or recently placed IUD's, pins, or plates. Once again, always check with your doctor before using this equipment.

Another thing to consider is the hefty price tag. Vibration exercise equipment starts at over \$2000, and goes up dramatically from there depending on the model and manufacturer. If you are on a budget, you might look into trying the equipment out at a gym or spa before making the leap to purchasing one for your home.

With all this, it does appear that vibration exercise equipment can be beneficial to your health. After weighing the factors, you can make the decision about whether or not it would be a helpful addition to your home gym.