

Fitness Career Opportunity

Sports-Medicine Physician

Sports-medicine physicians practice in sports-medicine clinics or work as team physicians. They treat sports-related injuries and help educate athletes in the prevention of injuries. Most sports-medicine physicians specialize in orthopedic surgery. An orthopedist treats muscular and skeletal injuries. Employment outlook is very good for this medical field.

For more information on sports-medicine physicians, contact:

American Sports Medicine
Association Board of
Certification, Inc.
660 West Duarte Road,
Ste. 1
Arcadia, CA 91007
(818) 445-1978

American Academy of
Orthopaedic Surgeons
6300 N. River Road
Rosemont, IL
60018-4242
(800) 346-2267
www.aaos.org

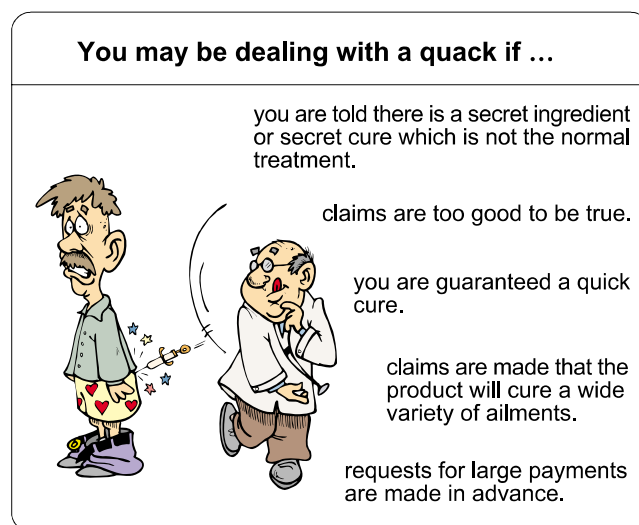
American Medical Society
for Sports Medicine
(AMSSM)
11639 Earnshaw
Overland Park, KS 66210
(913) 327-1415
www.amssm.org

American College of
Sports Medicine (ACSM)
401 W. Michigan St.
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3233
(317) 637-9200
www.acsm.org

Unit 6: Consumer Health Issues

Introduction

Nearly every week there is a new advertisement for a quick and easy way to lose weight or get in shape. You can see an ad on TV about magic pills that melt away the fat on your body no matter how much ice cream you eat. You can read in a magazine about a vibrating machine that can massage the fat right off your hips. You can hear on radio about an electric exercise machine that moves your legs for you so you can burn hundreds of calories without doing any work. With all of these simple ways to get fit “just a phone call away,” you would expect everyone in America to be fit and trim. Well, all of those ads that seem too good to be true really are just that: too good to be true.



Many people believe these and many other false claims. The more we want a claim to be true, the easier it is for us to believe it is true. Finding a pill that will let us eat endlessly without gaining weight is the kind of claim that answers our wildest dreams.

Dishonest people prey on our hope that fabulous and magical products will

work. These people engage in a practice called **quackery**. Quackery uses false practices or claims made by untrained persons pretending to have scientific knowledge. *Quacks* and *hucksters* are people who try to cheat people out of money by convincing them to buy gimmicks and gadgets. *Gimmicks* are attention-getting devices used to cheat, deceive, or trick. *Gadgets* are unnecessary mechanical devices that make a product seem “advanced” or “hi-tech.” Both are ways to get people to buy products. Millions of people fall for quackery and are ripped off. Quackery is the basis of some very big and profitable businesses.

Teenagers are often taken in by quackery. During our teen years, we have a particularly strong wish to look attractive. Teenagers are likely to believe in a quick fix that will make them look more attractive. Teenagers also want to believe that a product can make them look more masculine or feminine.

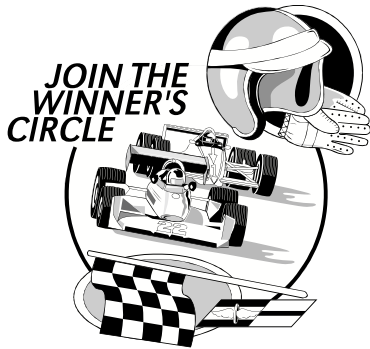
Consumers, or people who buy products and services, spend billions of dollars on fitness, health, and weight-loss products each year. Almost all of us will be a consumer of health and fitness products at some time in our life. Although some products are worthless, many health products can be helpful and improve your fitness. How can we become wise consumers when searching for health products?



We can use a little bit of knowledge to protect ourselves from products that don't work. Knowledge can help us choose those products that will help us reach our fitness goals. And knowledge will help us recognize those products that offer nothing but an empty promise.

Before you read any further in the unit, stop and test your consumer awareness of fitness, health, and weight-loss claims or products on the following page. Read each statement very carefully. Think about what you already know and what you have been told by others. Good luck!

What Influences Your Buying Decision?

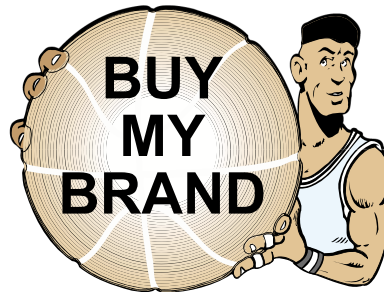


Do you buy athletic gear, clothes, and other fitness items because your favorite professional athletes wear them or endorse them in advertisements? Do you buy certain name-brand health and fitness products because everyone else buys them? Do you compare all brands of health and fitness products? Do you then make your selection on which ones give you the best value for

your money? To become a wise consumer, you must begin to understand the different reasons we buy products and services.

Celebrity Testimonials: The Famous Face

Consider what many of us feel when we see a star athlete selling athletic gear on TV. We respect and like these sports heroes. We would like to believe that these athletes advertise only high-quality products that improve performance. But this is not often the case. Rarely do celebrities have anything to do with the design or testing of products. Most often, athletes endorse or sell products because they are being paid huge amounts of money. Some star athletes get paid more money to endorse products than they do to play their sport.



Who pays star athletes millions of dollars to endorse products?

You do—every time you buy a product these celebrities are pushing. The cost of having professionals endorse a product can easily double its price!



Some star athletes get paid more money to endorse products than they do to play their sport.

Smart-Consumer Rule #1

Smart consumers do *not* let professional endorsements persuade them to buy a product.

Peer Pressure: Following the Crowd

Not only are many people influenced by celebrity advertisements, they are also influenced by their friends. Teenagers are often persuaded by their *peers*—their classmates and friends—to buy a certain name-brand product. One year everyone is wearing a certain make of basketball shoe or sweatshirt. The next year everyone seems to be wearing a certain make of athletic shorts or T-shirts. It feels good to “fit in” with a group and conform to what your friends are doing.



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You may want to buy health and fitness items in order to fit in with the crowd. If so, be aware of the reason why you are buying a certain product. Do not fool yourself into believing that you are making your decision strictly on the quality or value of the product. The next time you desire something, ask yourself these questions before you buy.

- Am I buying this item because everyone else has bought it?
- Is it a **fad** that will soon be out of fashion? A *fad* is a practice or an interest followed by many with great enthusiasm. Fads are short-lived. (Check your closet or garage for products that were once fads. After a few weeks or months, you lost interest and “retired” the items to a place where they now take up space.)
- Am I getting the best product or value for my money?
- Am I spending more money than necessary just for a certain name-brand item?

Smart-Consumer Rule # 2

Smart consumers buy a product because it fits their needs and offers them value, not because everyone else is wearing or using it. Consumers who are independent thinkers and do *not* always follow the crowd often make wise consumers.

Avoiding a Rip Off

When you are *ripped off*, you are being sold a product or service that is over-priced or even worthless. Protect yourself against rip offs. Learn to recognize ads that use false information or clever language to persuade you to buy a product.



A smart consumer knows how to separate fact from fallacy. A *fallacy* is a false or mistaken idea, often the result of deception or inaccurate information.

Techniques that will help you separate fact from fallacy include the following.

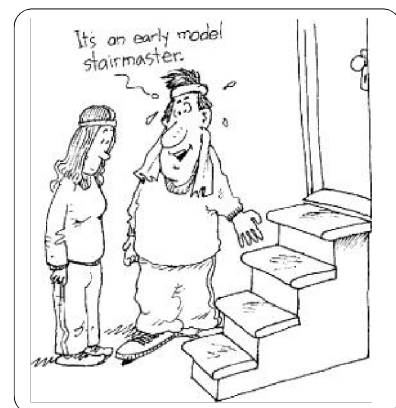
- Develop a questioning attitude. Ask yourself if the facts support the claims being made.
- If the claims sound too good to be true, they probably are! For example, does the product claim to have a secret ingredient? Does it claim to be good for almost anything? Is it available only from a particular source with payment in advance? Beware of advertisements that play on your emotions and your desire to believe in a magic product.
- Ads frequently use “evidence” that is based on opinion. Unfortunately, people making claims in ads are being paid by the company that makes the product. Many companies use stars or celebrities to make their products appear more attractive.
- Claims should be backed up with repeated studies that can be confirmed. Does the advertisement include a number or address that you can contact to check on the studies or findings mentioned? Is the study available to consumers? Are the persons who did the study qualified to do research in this particular area?
- Examine the qualifications of the people giving you advice. Even physicians often endorse products for money, not because they believe in the product.

- Seek advice from professionals whom you trust to help you analyze the claims being made.
- Be aware that quacks often encourage people to distrust health professionals such as doctors and registered dietitians.
- Beware of ads that promise...
 - ... to save you money and time.
 - ... “guaranteed satisfaction or your money back.”
 - ... you will “see quick and easy results without diet or exercise.”
 - ... “no side effects.”
 - ... to “flatten and firm your stomach in just minutes a day.”
 - ... to “burn several inches off” various body parts.
 - ... a “new scientific breakthrough.”
 - ... “instant success.”
 - ... to “slim the thighs in just minutes a day.”
 - ... “to melt off fat effortlessly.”
 - ... a “unique weight-loss system.”
 - ... to “burn fat and boost metabolism.”
 - ... to “increase your energy and fitness.”

Fitness Gimmicks and Gadgets: Empty Promises and Devices

The news media bombards us with advertisements of fitness and weight-loss products that guarantee to change our bodies from “spud” to “stud” with little effort or time! The different forms of news media include newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio.

Many fitness products are promoted by hucksters and quacks who try to cheat others out of money. They try to sell



products that are worthless. Hucksters and quacks are not qualified to make claims about these products. These products fall far short of their makers' claims. Gimmicks and gadgets are a waste of your time and money.

Passive Exercise Equipment: Too Good to Be True

Exercise equipment can be classified as either *active* or *passive*. **Active exercise equipment** requires your body to do the work. When you use items such as stationary bicycles, stairsteppers, treadmills, rowing machines, or weight machines, you exercise your body. Using active equipment is an effective way to improve your fitness.

On the other hand, **passive exercise equipment** does all the work for you. This kind of equipment can also be called *no-effort exercise equipment*. However, there is no such thing as no-effort exercise that can improve your fitness. Passive exercise equipment does not build fitness or help you to lose weight. Passive exercise equipment includes items such as body wraps, rubberized sweat suits, inversion boots, and electric bicycles. Passive devices are essentially a waste of time and money. Let's take a look at these passive devices and their empty promises.

Body Wraps. Some health clubs feature body wraps as a way to lose weight. They claim that being wrapped with tapes soaked in a special solution will dissolve several inches of body fat. However, any weight that a person loses from this method is due to fluid loss. Fluid loss is only temporary. **Dehydration**, an unhealthy loss of body fluids, and heat illness can result from this method. Wraps do not promote the loss of fat, and they can be dangerous.

Constricting Bands. Constricting bands are placed around a specific body part, such as the waist, in an attempt to trim that area. These items give you the illusion of losing fat by squeezing water out of your tissues. Like the fluids lost by using body wraps, the water lost from constricting bands is quickly replaced with your next drink. These items do not work and can be dangerous.

Electric Bicycles. The workout on an electric bicycle is minimal. All an individual has to do is hang on as a motor turns the pedals. The electric cycle does all of the work. The electric bicycle does not produce a fitness training effect or loss of weight.

Inversion Boots. Inversion boots are strapped around the ankles and allow a person to hang upside down. They claim to stretch the spine, improve muscle tone, improve mental function, and relieve stress. Inversion boots have been shown to be dangerous. They increase blood pressure and cause the heart to beat abnormally.

Plastic or Rubberized Sweat Suits. These insulated sweat suits keep the body from getting rid of heat during exercise. Rubberized sweat suits block the body's ability to cool itself. They cause an increase in water loss. Quick water loss makes the body quickly feel tired and exhausted. The fluid lost will be replaced with your next drink. These sweat suits can cause two dangerous conditions: dehydration and heat illness.

Steam or Sauna Bath. The temperature and humidity in steam rooms are high, which causes a person to sweat a lot. A steam bath should never be taken immediately after exercising. Steam baths keep the body from getting rid of the body heat created during a workout. In addition, steam baths will cause your body to lose even more body fluids after exercising. This can be very dangerous.



Always drink plenty of cool liquids before using a steam room.

Always cool down and drink plenty of cool liquids before using a steam room. While the moist heat of steam baths can help ease the ache of sore muscles, this does not contribute to real weight loss. Any loss of weight in a steam room is due to fluid loss and is replaced with the next drink.

The **sauna** features high temperatures but very low humidity. Sweat does evaporate, but the high heat and high sweat rate make it dangerous to use immediately following exercise. Many people claim that sweating cleanses or removes toxins from the body. However, losing a large amount of sweat also means losing a large amount of important substances found in sweat. If you use a sauna, be sure to drink plenty of cool fluids. The sauna and steam bath are ineffective weight-loss techniques.

Electric Stimulators/Toning Beds. Electric stimulators are machines that cause a mild electric current to move muscles and increase circulation. These devices do not enhance weight loss or increase muscle tone. They can be dangerous.

Thigh, Buttock, or Stomach Reducers. A device that promises to melt away the fat with no effort is a definite rip off! There are no special appliances that can accomplish **spot reduction** or the elimination of fat from your problem areas. Ads that make this guarantee are making false and dishonest claims.

Bust Developers. These devices promise females that their breasts will become bigger through certain exercises. It is true that certain weight training exercises for the chest can improve the appearance of breasts. These exercise firm and tone the muscles underneath the breasts. But, short of surgery, nothing can be done to increase the size of the actual breasts themselves.

Vibrating Exercise Belts. Exercise belts consist of a wide strap of material attached to an electric motor. The belt is placed around a body part that is to be reduced. Supposedly, the belt vibrates, shakes, or massages fat from the body. These devices do not break up fat or help you to lose weight. They are a waste of time and money.

Massage. A massage may make you feel good, be great for relaxation, and help loosen up tight muscles. However, massage does not break up fat and is useless for weight loss. There is no proven method for kneading, beating, slapping, or rubbing fat off the body!



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Devices that make you work and allow you to apply the training principles of physical fitness development are worthwhile. The no-effort approaches to fitness and weight control, however, are a waste of time and money. Gimmicks and gadgets that promise fitness, firmness, and weight loss effortlessly in just a few minutes a day are a rip off. The ways to acquire fitness and weight loss require time, patience, and effort.

Common Fitness Fallacies: Separating Fact from Fiction

Advertisements lead people to believe many fallacies about the ways to achieve health, fitness, and weight loss. *Fallacies* are false or mistaken ideas. The wise consumer learns the common fallacies used to sell fitness, health, and weight-loss products.

Fallacy: If I do enough repetitions with a special device, I can “spot reduce,” or burn the fat off that area of the body.

Fact: Performing endless repetitions using the latest thigh melter or abdominal exerciser will not trim fat in those areas. We cannot reduce body fat from a selected part of the body through exercise. The way fat is distributed in our body is due to our genetics, a kind of master blueprint that each of us is born with. Exercising a specific body part can increase muscle tone and firm up that particular area. However, even though the muscle may become stronger, no one will notice if it is buried under a layer of fat.

The only way to reduce fat and tone up your body is with regular vigorous exercise that is continuous for at least 20 minutes and involves entire body movement. An effective plan for reducing overall body fat includes a combination of low-fat eating, aerobic exercise, and muscular fitness activity.

Fallacy: **Cellulite** is a special kind of fat that can be specifically targeted.

Fact: Cellulite is a term coined to describe the dimpled, bumpy fat that often appears on the hips, thighs, and buttocks. Cellulite is nothing more than a lot of fat in certain areas with a slightly different skin texture. This stubborn fat has inspired various therapies, from liposuction (surgical removal) to massage, body wraps, and, most popular of all, “anticellulite” creams. These creams affect only the skin’s appearance and have absolutely no effect on the fat itself. No cosmetic product can change the structure of your body. A poor diet and lack of physical activity can result in poor

muscle tone and excess weight gain. This can cause more fat in specific areas of the body. This excess fat creates a cottage cheese appearance.

Where the additional fat is located depends upon your genetics. Females typically have extra layers of fat on the hips and thighs. Males usually gain fat in the abdominal region.

Instead of worrying about those specific areas, try getting involved in total body aerobic exercises. This will help burn fat all over the body. Aerobic exercise is the only way to rid excess fat from the body.

Fallacy: If I wear a rubberized sweat suit or body constricting bands when I work out, I will lose more weight.

Fact: There are many products such as rubberized sweat suits that claim to assist you in losing weight. However, a high volume of sweat loss does not equal a high amount of fat lost. When you work out, especially in a hot or humid environment, your body attempts to cool itself by sweating.

The weight you lose while sweating comes from water loss, not fat. That temporary weight loss will be replenished as you drink. If you lose too much water, you will risk dehydration and heat illness. This causes a lack of energy and early fatigue.

Exercising in clothing that does not allow the skin to breathe is dangerous. You should wear clothing that allows your sweat to evaporate and thus allows your body to keep cool.

It is important to drink plenty of water before, during, and after physical activity to prevent overheating and dehydration. Staying cool during exercise helps you last longer and perform better.

Fallacy: Fashion in our culture tells us that thin individuals are the ideal, “model” body type.

Fact: The model ideal presented by the media is, in fact, an unhealthy standard. Many of today’s models suffer from eating disorders, malnutrition, poor muscle tone, and fitness. There are many health risks associated with this lifestyle. Skinny does not necessarily mean healthy or fit. People can look thin but have a high percentage of body fat. You may be at the appropriate body weight or even lower than the weight standards suggest, yet you may be very flabby and out-of-shape!

Looks can be very deceiving. Good health and fitness require regular exercise and proper nutritional habits.

Fallacy: If I eat only low-fat foods, I won’t gain weight.

Fact: Many low-fat products on the market are designed for health-conscious individuals. Fancy advertising claims falsely mislead people into believing that they can eat unlimited low-fat foods and not worry about counting calories or gaining weight.

Low-fat does not necessarily mean low calorie, healthy, or nutritious. Many such products are actually loaded with sugar and calories and often offer little nutrient value.

Fad Diets: A Losing Strategy That Leads to Weight Gain

Most people who want to lose fat think the solution is to find a diet that promises quick weight loss. Americans are willing to pay nearly any price and try any quick-fix method to lose body fat. So Americans continue to buy the endless products and **fad diets** on the market that promise to get rid of fat. However, the only answer is a lifetime commitment to regular exercise and a low-fat diet.



Fad diets promote weight loss *without* using sound nutritional practices. Most fad diets severely limit the number of calories a person takes in daily. When the body does not get enough calories, it begins to feed upon itself. However, instead of feeding on its fat, the body feeds on its muscle protein for fuel. While on most fad diets, a person loses mostly muscle and water—with relatively little loss of body fat.

While some diets may result in a temporary weight loss, most do not result in permanent fat loss. They can also be hazardous to your health. Scientists have shown that fad diets actually slow your **metabolic rate**. The *metabolic rate* is a measure of how fast your body burns energy, or calories. When you *significantly* decrease the amount of food you normally eat, your body slows the rate at which it burns calories. If you don't increase the amount you exercise, a fad diet may actually cause your body to gain fat!

There are no quick-fixes to healthy and permanent weight loss. Do not believe the advertising of crash diets, drugs, or any “miracle cures” that promise quick weight loss. Temporary diets produce temporary results.



Excess pounds gained on the body have been gained slowly through poor eating habits and lack of exercise. Likewise, permanent weight loss is also a slow process consisting of regular exercise and proper nutrition.

Drugs Used for Weight Control: Harmful Side Effects

Appetite suppressants and **thyroid hormones** are two general categories of drugs commonly used by doctors to treat overweight or obese people.

Appetite suppressants are drugs designed to keep people from feeling hungry. Thyroid hormones are drugs used to treat individuals with thyroid problems that may cause weight gain or other medical problems. These drugs are believed to increase the body's metabolic rate.

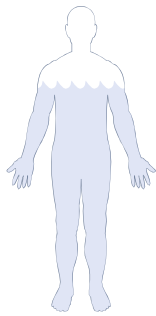
These drugs can be used safely when used under a doctor's care. However, these drugs can be dangerous when misused. They have unpleasant or dangerous side effects such as insomnia, dizziness, depression, nausea, and an increase in heart rate. They can also be habit-forming.



Research has shown that very few overweight or obese individuals have a hormone problem. Most people are overweight or obese simply because they have poor nutritional and exercise habits.

Diuretics: Leading to a Dangerous Loss of Water

Diuretics are drugs used to increase the amount of fluids lost through urine. Many individuals take diuretics to increase the amount of water their bodies eliminate. They believe that water loss is true weight loss. Of course, water loss is only temporary. You will replace lost water by drinking fluids.



Using drugs to make your body rid itself of important fluid is dangerous. Diuretics can make you weak and diminish your athletic performance. This extreme loss of fluids upsets the body's chemical balance and potassium levels which can even lead to heart problems. If used for extended periods of time, they can damage the kidneys and cause blood clotting during menstruations. Diuretics are a poor solution to weight loss. Water loss is not true weight reduction because no calories are burned.

The Solution to Weight Loss: Exercise and a Low-Fat, Nutritious Diet

Exercise helps to keep your metabolic rate at a consistently high level. It helps you develop and maintain muscle mass when you are trying to lose weight. Permanent weight control comes from a lifelong commitment to regular exercise and good eating habits. Fad diets and occasional exercise programs will only end in disappointment. Here are some facts to remember regarding weight loss.

- No foods or pills have been scientifically shown to burn fat.
- There is no easy and quick way to lose fat.
- Excess calories, that is, calories consumed above your daily needs, will be stored by your body as fat. In addition, your body readily stores fatty foods as fat.
- Diets that eliminate one of the basic food groups are usually not based on sound principles.

Performance-Altering Drugs: Facts and Fallacies

Fitness and sports enthusiasts want to believe claims that certain drugs or supplements can improve their athletic performance. Many athletes are looking for magic pills or potions that may just offer that winner's edge.

It is difficult to improve upon a well-balanced diet. However, various nutritional supplements are popularly used as **ergogenic aids**. *Ergogenic aids* are substances or techniques that distributors claim will enhance performance. Unlike drug manufacturers, supplement distributors can release unproven information and untested products to the public. Health claims made about them do not have to be proven before they are introduced on the market.

Every year Americans spend millions of dollars on useless products that claim to give them a competitive edge. The following are just a few of the more common supplements and what their distributors claim they will do.

Amino Acids/Protein Supplements. Amino acids and protein supplements do not enhance muscle strength or size—training does. Most athletes have protein intakes that exceed recommendations. Too much protein in the diet can harm the kidneys.

Sports Drinks. Most sports drinks offer little advantage over water, especially when you exercise for a short time and at a moderate intensity. Many companies try to attract athletes to their products by claiming that these sports drinks help replace important minerals lost through sweat.

Adequate fluid intake is vital for optimum performance, but no ergogenic benefit has been proven from sports drinks. However, for intense exercise of 90 minutes or more in extreme heat and humidity, sports drinks may be helpful for replacing fluid and lost nutrients.

Stimulants. Various **stimulants** are often taken by active individuals in an attempt to improve their physical performance. *Stimulants* are drugs or substances that cause an increase in heart rate and blood pressure and decrease the appetite. They are often used to enhance performance, increase alertness, and delay fatigue. Caffeine, amphetamines, and

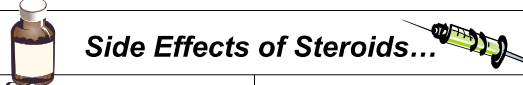


ephedrine are stimulants commonly used. Stimulants can be dangerous and cause unwanted side effects such as increased anxiety, dizziness, nervousness, irritability, headaches, abnormal heart rate, and addiction.

Vitamins and Minerals. Many companies and writers claim that vitamins and minerals increase energy levels. No vitamin or mineral supplement can provide energy. They should not be used to compensate for a poor diet. While some individuals may require vitamin and mineral supplements, the actual benefit of taking vitamins is doubtful for anyone who eats a well-balanced diet. Regardless of the supplements you take, you still need to eat properly to be healthy and fit.

Some individuals may benefit from a simple multivitamin supplement. Those individuals for whom supplements can be appropriate include dieters on a restricted-calorie diet, athletes who exercise heavily, pregnant women, total vegetarians, and individuals with food allergies. Supplements do not enhance performance, increase strength, provide energy, or build muscles.

Anabolic Steroids. *Anabolic steroids* are a synthetic version of the male sex hormone, **testosterone**. Steroids have become an ergogenic aid to increase strength and lean muscle mass. For steroids to help build muscle, they have to be taken along with a strenuous weight training program and diet. However, steroids have many serious and dangerous side effects. Steroids are illegal unless prescribed by a physician.

 Side Effects of Steroids...	
For Men	For Women
Stunted growth	Facial hair
Baldness	Male pattern baldness
Development of breasts	Breast shrinkage
Shrunken testicles	Increase of masculinity
Impotence and sterility	Enlarged clitoris
Severe acne	Severe acne
Increased aggression	Depression
Hallucinations	Hallucinations
Cancer	Menstrual irregularities
Heart disease	Heart disease
High blood pressure	High blood pressure
Bad breath	Bad breath
Liver and kidney damage	Liver damage
	Deepened voice

Steroids have many negative side effects that differ for males and females.

Doctors prescribe steroids to patients only for medical reasons. The use of steroids to improve performance, or gain strength or muscle size is not a medical reason and is clearly not worth the health risks.

Once again, the answer to improving your physical appearance or performance is *not* found in drugs.

Health Clubs: Finding One That Fits Your Needs

Over 10 million Americans work out in health clubs. Before you join one, find out all you can about it. Some are reputable; some may not be. And some will fit your needs better than others. The following is a list of some of the things you should know before joining a local health, fitness, or sports club.

Get referrals. When you are in the market to join a health club, get recommendations from people who have goals and interests similar to your own. Ask club members what they like and dislike about their health club.

Visit the club. Go to the facility during the time you will be working out. This will give you an idea of how busy the club and how available the equipment is. See if the club is well maintained. Inspect the equipment and machines, weight room, aerobics room, and locker room. Are weight-room rules and safety reminders posted? Are there enough instructors or employees to assist you? Do members receive adequate instructions on how to use the equipment? Are they knowledgeable about all the equipment? Do they explain how to use the equipment in easy-to-follow language? Is the environment clean and safe? Is the facility handicapped accessible?



Does the club have a good record? Call your local consumer protection agency and Better Business Bureau to see if any complaints or negative reports have been filed against the club. You may want to look for an established club that has been in business for a while.

Is the club adequately insured? Many states require health clubs to post bond money. Bond money protects members from losing their money if the club goes out of business.

Does the club have qualified instructors? Ask if the club employs certified personal trainers and fitness and aerobic instructors. Instructors should be certified by a nationally recognized certification program and/or have a college degree in physical education or other fitness-related major. In addition, all instructors and employees should be certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid.



Does the club offer a variety of fitness classes? Check to see that the club offers a variety of fitness classes. Do they offer many types of fitness classes at different intensity levels? Attend a trial class at peak times or when you might be regularly attending the club.

Watch out for hard-sell. Try the club out before becoming a member. Even if you are highly interested in joining, ask for a trial membership to make sure the club fits your needs and desires. Hard-sell advertising often means that a club needs a large membership to support high operating costs. And a large membership may mean the facility is overcrowded.

Avoid signing your life away. Many clubs try to get you to sign long-term contracts. Since a large number of new members quit using a health club after a few months, it might be better to sign up on a monthly basis.

Read the membership contract. Make sure you understand all portions of the membership contract. Ask if the membership includes access to the whole facility and all programs offered. Find out if you can work out anytime the club is open for business. See that there is a clause in the contract that gives you a refund in the event you become ill, disabled, or move before it expires. Don't rely on verbal agreements. Carefully read the "waiver of liability." If you sign a contract and then change your mind, most states have a three-day period during which you can back out of the contract.

Summary

Have you ever been tempted to buy a product that promises bulging biceps, a flat stomach, thinner thighs, or endless energy?

Before you buy any product to improve your fitness, become informed. Fat-fighting advertisements bombard us with the “sure cure” to the problem of obesity. Hucksters and quacks often claim that just by ordering the latest “proven method” for fighting flab, one can have a “toned, lean, and muscular body” overnight. Protect yourself from being ripped off by understanding some basics on how the body responds to exercise. Use different resources to research products. Do not let someone sell you worthless products. Do not be taken in by products that claim to do the work for you or promise miraculous results. Learn to be a smart *consumer*. Do not buy worthless products.

As interest in fitness and health has increased, so has the number of health clubs. Your decision on whether to join a club and how to select one should depend on many factors. For example, what does a membership cost and what are your personal needs or desires? Get answers to the *Health Club Questionnaire*, and inspect the club before you sign a contract to become a member.

Top performance cannot be achieved through pills, powders, or drinks but only through a rigorous training schedule. Your energy needs are best filled through a variety of foods and adequate fluid intake. There’s only one way to improve your performance: You have to train hard and regularly, eat properly, and get plenty of rest.