



Want to be fitter? Questions to ask yourself

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May is the month of Movement for Good Health, a day we celebrate on 10 May (and, of course, every day!), so it's a good month to think about starting an exercise programme of some sort.

Some questions to ask yourself before you invest time, money and energy:

1. How fit am I?
It's a good idea to have an assessment before you get started. Many professionals can do the basics – blood pressure, heart rate, lung function, body fat percentage – but it's a good idea to visit your physiotherapist before selecting an activity. She or he can assess if you have any musculoskeletal problems which might surface and cause problems – someone with joint problems may elect to swim or cycle rather than pound the streets in running gear, for example.
2. Why do I want to exercise?
Be honest with yourself: you want to lose weight; you want to have a better-looking body; you want to have more energy to cope with life; you want to be able to play soccer with your kids; you want to surprise your schoolmates at a reunion; you have a specific goal in mind such as running Comrades.
3. How long has it been since I exercised regularly?
Your path to fitness will be different if you've just had a six-week layoff due to injury, or if you've been sedentary for years.
4. What are my expectations?
Do you think three weeks will be all it takes to start feeling great? Are you planning on toning your tummy to get into that wedding dress in a month? Trimming your expectations to fit your reality is as important as knowing your real goals. Chances are you are no longer able to do the weekend warrior thing

– playing a quick game of seven-a-side with mates or taking your unconditioned thighs on a hike up the Magaliesberg will leave you aching and stiff the next day. “You need to do regular physical activity to stay in reasonable shape; if you’re just starting again after a long break, you need to know what you can expect,” says Professor Witness Mudzi, President of the South African Society of Physiotherapy. “It will go slowly at first, but between week three and week six, some of the mental and physical benefits should kick in, and you’ll start to enjoy it.”

5. What kind of activity do I enjoy?

Don’t do what you think you should do – an hour daily in the gym, for example – if that’s the kind of activity that bores you or which you don’t enjoy. Do you enjoy swimming? Dancing? Being outside in natural surroundings? Playing with a dog? Gardening? “You can get a really good workout running and throwing a ball for a dog in the park, or doing dance classes,” says Professor Mudzi. “Opt for an activity you will enjoy; that way, you’ll keep doing it.”

To find a physiotherapist near you, go to www.saphysio.co.za.